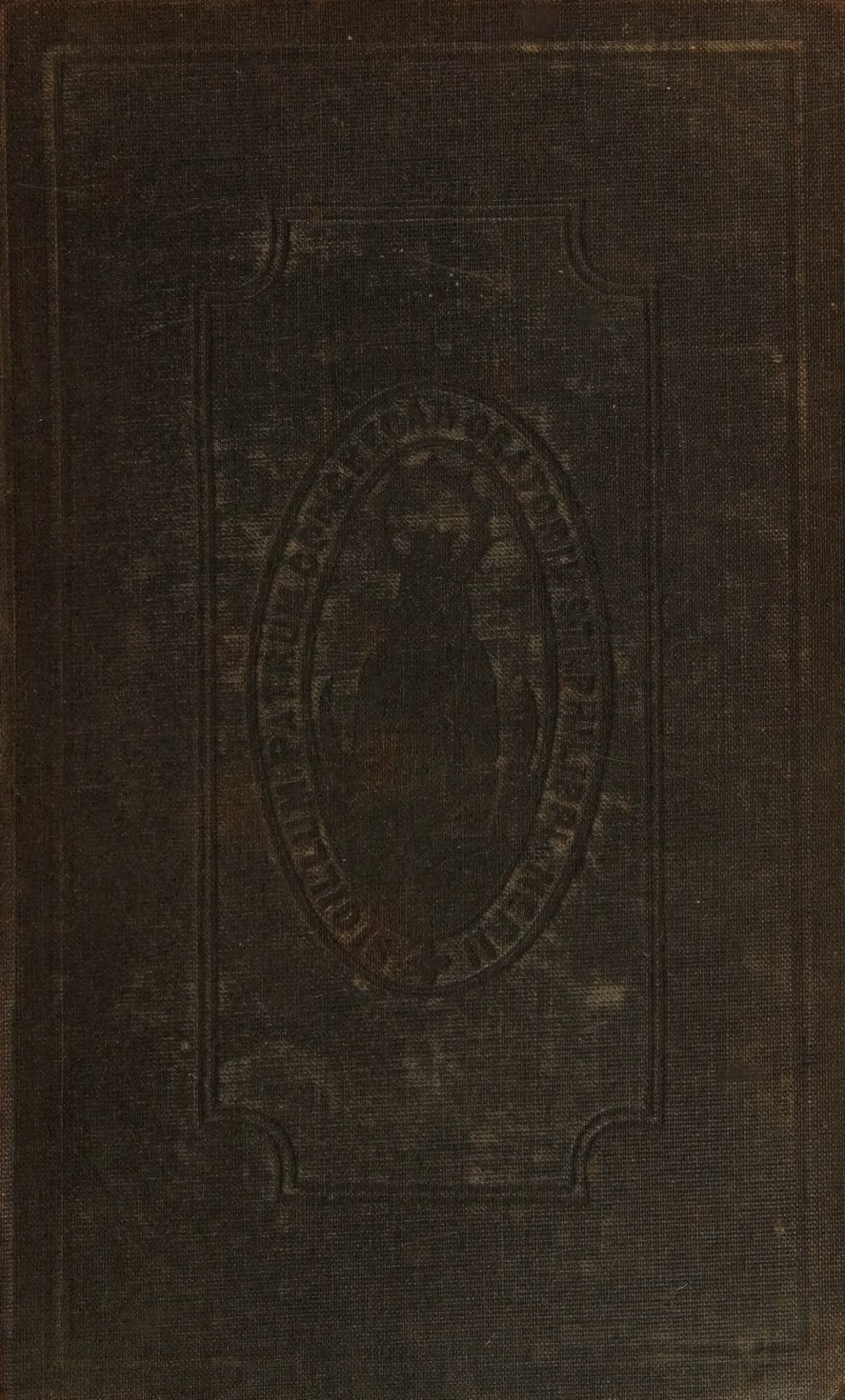

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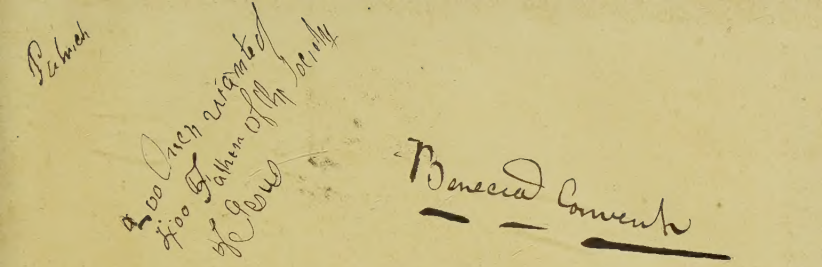

MODERN SAINTS

AND

Servants of God.

FABER, FREDERICK WILLIAM

The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIFE

OF

S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

VOL. II.

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MDCCCLIV.

We hereby approve and sanction the Series of Lives of the Canonized and Beatified Saints, the Servants of God declared Venerable, and others commonly reputed to have died in the odour of sanctity, now in course of publication by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, and we cordially recommend it to the Faithful, as calculated to promote the glory of God and of His Saints, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Westminster, the Feast of the Nativity of our B. Lady, A.D. 1851.

N. Card. Wiseman

Oc. 4745

TO

THE REGULAR CLERGY

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

THE CHILDREN

OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,

ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,

AND THE SONS

OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,

THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,

WHO,

IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT

OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,

OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE

OF THEIR HIRED LODGINGS,

HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,

AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL

THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,

AND WHO,

THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,

AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,

THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION

OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,

HAVE PERPETUATED,

AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,

THE BLESSED LINEAGE

OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of St. Bernard,
M.DCCC.XLVII.

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THE LIFE

OF

S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

THE LIFE

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ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

BOOK IV.

After the chapter, Francis, notwithstanding the bad state of his health, actuated by his zeal, undertook to preach repentance in the towns adjacent to Assisi, where he dilated in forcible language, on vice and virtue ; and the sufferings and happiness of a future life. The inhabitants of Canaria(1) were so moved by his preaching, that they followed him in crowds, forsaking their usual occupations. Many also, from the neighbouring villages, joined them, and all together solicited him to teach them how to profit by his instructions.

(1) Father Helyot, in the History of Religious Orders, tom. 7, chap. 29, page 215, says, that Saint Francis having learnt, by a revelation made to Saint Clare and her brother Silvester, that God had called him to labour for the salvation of souls, came with brothers Massé and Angelus of Rieti to the small town of Canaria, where he established the Third Order. This is a great mistake, made in following other authors. The saint then went to Bevagna, and this was in 1212. It was only in 1221 that he went to Canaria, and that the Third Order was instituted at Poggi-Bonzi. All this is clearly laid down in the Annals of Wading, and has been followed by the author of "Annales Latines du Tiers Ordre de la Penitence," printed at Paris by Rob. Chevillon, in 1686.

Many married men were desirous of separating themselves from their wives, in order to embrace the religious state, and many married women were anxious to shut themselves up in cloisters; but, the holy patriarch, not wishing to break up well-assorted marriages, nor to depopulate the country, advised them to serve God in their own houses, and promised to give them a rule by which they might progress in virtue, and live as religious, without practising the austerities of that state of life.

He was under the necessity of repeating the same injunctions in several towns in Tuscany, particularly in Florence, where similar views prevailed, and where they had already commenced building a monastery for females, who were desirous of renouncing the world. While he was yet ruminating on the mode of life he should prescribe for them, he assembled them all, and formed them into two congregations, the one of men and the other of women; and having given each of them a president, they gave themselves separately up to exercises of piety and practices of mercy, with so much fervour, that a contemporary author compares them to the Christians whom Tertullian so eloquently eulogises. With the alms which the two congregations collected, they built a hospital for the sick and aged, in the outskirts of the town, where all the virtues of charity were assiduously exercised; an establishment which is extant at this day.(2) St. Antoninus, when archbishop of

(2) Marian. Flor. Chron. c. 20.—Tert. Apol. cap. 38 et 39.

Florence, removed these pious assemblies to a locality near the Church of St. Martin, for the convenience of the poor. The vicinity of the church and their good works procured for them the name of the "good men of St. Martin;" and they were afterwards called the "Penitents of St. Francis," because they followed the rule of the third order of Penance, which the Saint instituted.

This zealous preacher, having gone from Florence to Gagiano, near Poggi-Bonzi, in Tuscany, met a shop-keeper of his acquaintance, whose name was Luchesio, who had been very avaricious, and an enthusiastic partisan of the faction of the Guelphs,(3) but who having been converted a few months before, now lived a very Christian-like life, gave away great sums in alms, attended the sick in hospitals, received strangers hospitably into his house, and endeavoured to instil similar sentiments into Bonadonna, his wife. They had already asked Francis to put them in a way of sanctifying their lives, which should be suitable to their position; and the holy man had given them this answer.: "I have been thinking of late of instituting a third order, in which married persons might serve God perfectly; and I think you could not do better than to enter it." After having given the subject serious considera-

(3) This shows that the Guelphs and Ghibellines had their partisans in Italy before the year 1228, although they only broke out in that year, according to the writers quoted by Spond, ad ann. 1228, n. 4. He notices all that is most probable as to the origin of the names of those two factions, which, after all, leaves the question in great uncertainty. See also Histoire de la Decadence de l'Empire," liv. 5, pp. 435 et 494.

tion, Luchesio and his wife entreated him to admit them into this new order. He made them assume a modest and simple dress, of a grey colour, with a cord with several knots in it for a girdle, and he prescribed them verbally certain pious exercises, which they were to follow until such time as he should have composed the rule.

This was the beginning of the third order of St. Francis, which many persons in the environs of Poggi-Bonzi embraced, and which was soon established in Florence by the congregation of men and women of which we have just spoken. The following year at latest, the founder composed(4) a rule for this order, which he called the Order of the Brethren of Penance, in which the sisters were comprised, which was also called the third order, or the Order of Tertiaries, as relative to the two older orders; the order of Friars Minors, which is the first, and that of the Poor Clares, which is the second. This rule was subsequently confirmed by Pope Nicholas IV., with some changes, which he considered advisable as well in regard to the times as to the order itself.

The holy patriarch manifests therein not only the zeal which animated him in all that concerned the purity of the faith, but also the prudence which guided all his actions. He requires that all those

(4) Some persons have thought that the Rule of the Third Order was composed by Pope Nicholas IV.; but Wading proves clearly that Saint Francis is the author of it, and St. Bonaventura notices it also in the 4th chapter of his Legend. Nicholas IV., who confirmed it in 1289, made such alterations in it as he thought proper, as has been said, and as he himself declares in his Bull "Unigenitus," as given by Ant. de Sillis, "Lib. de Orig. et Progres. Tert. Ord." tom. 2, p. 7. Wading, in "Regul. Tertiar. Argum."

who apply for admission into the order, shall be carefully examined in the Catholic faith, and their submission to the authority of the Church, and he directs that they shall only be received after having made profession of all the orthodox truths; and that great care shall be taken not to admit any heretic, nor any one suspected of heresy; and should any such be detected, after having been admitted, he insists on their being immediately informed against. He, likewise, directs that their previous conduct may be inquired into, to ascertain whether any notorious crimes are imputed to them, or whether their morals are irreproachable, and he desires that they be warned to restore what they have which belongs to any other person; and he forbids receiving any married female (5) into the order without the consent of her husband.

The profession consists in a promise to keep all

(5) We cannot understand why Father Helyot, in making the analysis of the Third Order in the "History of Religious Orders," tom. 7, ch. 29, p. 217, says that it is necessary to inquire whether the person who wishes to enter it, is not engaged in the bonds of matrimony, which is an obstacle to his reception, unless he has his wife's consent, and reciprocally that of the wife of her husband. These two articles are not in the Rule of the Third Order. 1. St. Francis was careful not to say that the bonds of matrimony were an obstacle to the reception, since it was to married persons that he first proposed entering the Order; and since St. Bonaventura says that he instituted it for clerks, laymen, for virgins, and for married persons of either sex. 2. He forbids receiving married women without the consent of their husband, but he does not require the consent of the wives; for he knew very well that in the Old Law if a wife had made a vow, she was not obliged to keep it if her husband disapproved of it; upon which St. Augustine says, that his quality of chief gives him an authority which the wife has not, over exercises of piety and other things. It is not true, therefore, that a husband requires the consent of his wife for making profession of the Third Order instituted by St. Francis. "Num. xxx., 12 et 13."—"S. Augus. Ep. ad Ecdic. 272, Edit. Bened."

God's commandments, and to perform such penances as the visitor shall enjoin for faults committed in breach of the practices required by the rule. The habit is similar to what was given to Luchesio and his wife; but so that this may be dispensed from, according to the state of life of the persons, and the customs of the country in which they may be. The spiritual exercises, laid down in the rule, have nothing in them which can interfere with the different stations of persons living in the world. Days of fasting and abstinence are prescribed, but modified prudently for the infirm, for pregnant women, for travellers and for labouring people; and it is clearly explained that these observances are not obligatory under pain of sin, and that they only bind the transgressor to perform the penance imposed on him, unless the transgression has at the same time contravened any law of God, or commandment of the Church.

St. Francis, moreover, strenuously recommends to the brethren and sisters, to avoid all words tending to swearing or imprecation, to avoid the theatre, dancing, and all profane meetings; to undertake no law-suits, and to live in fraternal union: to take great care of the sick of the order, to bury the dead, and to pray for them.

He adds to this, an article which is deserving of peculiar notice; it is, that all persons who enter the order, and have property over which they have the disposal, shall make their wills(6) within

(6) He does not speak of wills written entirely in the testator's own hand, because he was in a country of written law, where they are not valid. But in France they are so, as being less likely to have been suggested, and more likely to mark plainly the testator's wish.

three months after their profession, lest they should die intestate. We see that his intention was to make them think on death, and to have their minds free for meditating on the important affair of their salvation, and to prevent those dissentions which frequently occur after the death of such as have not regulated their temporal affairs before being called away. Wills which are made during a last illness, are frequently exposed to deceit and fraud. They are never better made than when executed while the testator is in good health,(7) in possession of all his faculties.

By the institution of the third order, Francis proposes to himself (8) to reanimate the fervour of the faithful, to induce all the world, those in orders, laics, married persons of either sex, and

(7) In order to make one's will properly, it is desirable to consider the state in which we shall be at the time of death; to set aside all prejudices, all anger, to dispose conscientiously of one's effects, with equity, with charity, after having consulted God and one of His ministers, and even a man conversant in the law and customs of the country, to avoid those errors which give rise to the annulling of wills. It is very unusual to see a well-made will.

(8) The Rule of the Third Order, with explanations which mark its spirit and its object, has been given to the public by several of the children of St. Francis; amongst whom it is right to distinguish Father Claudius Frassen, of the great convent of the Observantines of Paris, Doctor of the Sorbonne, whose learned and pious works, and whose rare virtues, have rendered his memory precious to the Order of Friars Minors, and to the whole Church. The best editions of the Rule of the Third Order which he has explained, are those which have been printed by Ed. Couterot, at the "Bon Pasteur;" there are some things in the later editions which are not to my taste. Denys the Carthusian has explained this Rule also, with much light and piety, such as are found in all his other works. Father Thomassin, Priest of the Oratory, says that the Third Order of St. Dominic, the Rule of which was confirmed by Pope Innocent VII., in the year 1405, that of the Servites, and that of the Third Order of St. Francis de Paul, are all similar to that of St. Francis. "Discipline de l'Eglise," Part 4, liv. 1, ch. 62, n. 13. Ed Française, 1679.

such as were living in a state of celibacy, to a stricter observance of God's commandments, to live a more Christian and Catholic life, and to add the practice of virtues to the duties of civil life. His views met with astonishing success; the order was established, and spread with the greatest rapidity through all conditions(9) of life. Cardinals, bishops, emperors, empresses, kings, queens, considered themselves honoured in being admitted into it, and it has given to the Church an infinite number of saints of either sex, and of blessed, who are publicly revered with her sanction. Wading says, that in his day, (that is in 1623,) there were at the courts of Madrid more than sixty lords who belonged to the third order; and Cardinal Trejo, who had joined it, wrote to him in these terms on the subject of the works of St. Francis, which that author was about to give to the public with learned notes.

"You praise me with some surprise, that wearing the purple of Cardinal, I should have taken the habit and made solemn profession to adhere to the rules of the third order of St. Francis.

(9) The Third Order spread so rapidly, that twenty years after its institution Peter des Vignes, Chancellor and favourite of the Emperor Frederic II., wrote to the Prince to say that the Friars Minors had established two societies, one of each sex, and that there was hardly any one who had not his or her name in it. This was to justify the irritation of his master, who was incensed against the Friars Minors, because, according to the intention of their Holy Patriarch, they supported the interests of the Holy See, whose bitter enemy he was. This Prince excited a violent persecution against the Third Order, which lasted till his death in 1250, as St. Rose of Viterbo had foretold, who was herself of that Order, and whom the officers of the Emperor sent with her whole family into exile, for having converted several heretics, and reconciled many schismatics to the obedience of the Holy See, by her reasoning. Petr. a Vineis. Epist. lib. 1. Epis. 37. Wading, ad ann. 1252, n. 8.

Could I do less than devote myself wholly to his order, I, who owe to him all that I have, and all that I am? Does not the cord of St. Francis deserve to gird even royal purple? St. Louis, king of France, St. Elizabeth, queen of Hungary, wore it, as well as many other sovereigns and princesses. In our own day, Philip III., king of Spain, died in the habit of the blessed father; Queen Elizabeth, wife of Philip IV., the reigning monarch of Spain, and the Princess Mary, his sister, have made their profession in the third order. Why then should it be a subject of astonishment to you, that a cardinal should cover his purple with a garment of ash colour, and gird himself with a cord? If this dress seems vulgar and vile, I require it the more, because, finding myself raised to a high degree of honour, I must humble myself the more in order to avoid pride. But is not the garb of St. Francis, which is of ash colour, a real purple, which may adorn the dignity of kings and cardinals? Yes, it is a true purple, dyed in the blood of Jesus Christ, and in the blood which issued from the stigmates of His servants. It gives, therefore, a royal dignity to those who wear it. What have I done, therefore, in clothing myself with this garment? I have added purple to purple, the purple of royalty, to the purple of the cardinalate; thus, far from being humiliated by it, I have reason to fear that I have done myself too much honour, and that I derive from it too much glory."

These sentiments of this learned and pious Cardinal, are well calculated to silence the proud

and irreligious spirits who turn into ridicule practices which the Church approves, and which her most illustrious children embrace with fervour. We have seen Queen Anu of Austria receive at Paris the holy habit of a penitent, and make profession(10) of the rule of the third order of St. Francis; Queen Maria Theresa of Austria, wife of the renowned King Louis XIV., follow this example, and even permit herself to be chosen superior of the sisters of the congregation, established in the church(11) of the great convent of the observance, under the protection of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and assist at the various pious exercises with great edification.

The Holy See has loaded the brethren and sisters of the third order with many spiritual favours; and has granted them many privileges and indulgences; and has given to them a participation in all the merits which are gained in the other two orders. What is singular is, that shortly after its institution, congregations of Tertiaries were formed,(12) in which they lived in

(10) Father Helyot inserts the document of her profession, which bears her own signature, the original of which is preserved in the Nazareth Convent at Paris, to which that princess sent it. Hist. des Ord. Relig. tom. 7, c. 29, p. 224.

(11) Father Frassen notices in his "Explication de la Règle," p. 297 et seq., and p. 31 of the edition of 1684, that Queen Maria Theresa made her profession of the Third Order in the great convent of the Observance at Paris; that she contributed by her royal munificence to the building of the beautiful chapel where the assemblies of the Order are held; that she laid the first stone, and that at the earnest entreaties of this pious Queen, Pope Clement IX. granted, by his Bull dated July 1, 1669, a plenary Indulgence in perpetuity in this chapel for the feast of St. Elizabeth, who is the Patron.

(12) Many religious companies, as Father Helyot observes, have had for their founders persons who belonged to the Third Order of St. Francis.

community of property, making the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and practising the works of mercy; and that the Sovereign Pontiff raised them to a religious body.(13) Thus, besides the secular third order, there is now a religious one, of both sexes, which Pope Leo X. confirmed and extended by his Bull, dated 28th of January, 1521, in which he abridged the rule and adapted it to the observances of the religious state. St. Elizabeth of Hungary, being a widow, joined the three vows of religion to the profession of the third order of St. Francis, three years after the death of the blessed patriarch, which makes her to be justly considered as the Mother of the religious of both sexes of the third order, since she was the first Tertiary who took these solemn vows.(14)

Cardinal de Berulle, who founded the Congregation of the Priests of the Oratory, and M. Olier, who founded the Seminaries of St. Sulpice, were both of the Third Order. Father Frassen says, that Olier, who was a man of most exemplary life, entered it with such fervour, that his example drew many others into it; that he induced the ecclesiastics of his seminary and the parishioners of St. Sulpice to become children of St. Francis, becoming, as he himself was, brothers of Penance; and that th caused a revival of the congregation of the Third Order in the convent of the Observantines.

(13) With respect to the time of this establishment, we have nothing more correct than what Helyot says, ch. 30.

(14) Some have called in question St. Elizabeth's having been of the Third Order, and really a religious; but as to the first, we must believe St. Bonaventure, who speaks positively on the subject, and assures us that he had it from the saint's confessor.—Serm. de S. Eliz. tom. 5, Oper. And as to the second, Pope Gregory IX., who had been in communication with this Princess, notices in the Bull of her canonization, that she took the religious habit, and submitted herself to the yoke of obedience; which proves that he considered her vows as solemn ones, made under the authority of the Holy See; although she had not made the vow of enclosure, and that she went out for the practice of good works. There are many writers who speak of her as a religious. See "Hist. des Ordres Religieux," tom. 7, ch. 38, p. 292.

Luchésio and his wife, who were the first Tertiaries whom St. Francis received, acquired by the exercise of prayer and good works, a holiness which God honoured by many miracles during their life and after their death ; but the wife was sanctified by the husband. Although she had embraced, after his example, the state of piety, she continued to disapprove the great donations of alms which he made, and to prevent them as much as was in her power, in consequence of that spirit of avarice and self-interest which constantly induces such tempers to fear that they shall come to want.

One day Luchésio having given all the bread that was in his house to the poor, he begged his wife to give something to others who followed. She flew into a passion, like the wife of Tobias,(15) and after having reproached him with the care he took of strangers to the prejudice of those of his own household, she said that it was quite plain that his fasts and watchings had disordered his brain. The husband, as patient as he was charitable, was not irritated by these reproaches, but quietly requested his wife to look into the place where the bread was kept, thinking of Him, who by His power had satiated several thousand persons with a few loaves and fishes. (16) She did so, and found a large quantity of fresh bread, sufficient to supply the wants of all the poor. This miracle had such an effect upon her, that from that time forward, he had no occasion to

(15) Tob. ii. 22. (16) Math. xiv. 15. Mark viii. 6.

exhort her to the performance of works of mercy; both husband and wife gave themselves up to them with emulation, and devoted themselves to them until their deaths. The husband's charity shows us that almsgiving does not impoverish; but that, on the contrary, God increases, even sometimes by miracles, the property of such as give liberally; and the conversion of Luchesio's wife shows that the spirit of interest and avarice, covered by pretence of economy, renders piety false and deceitful.

After having established his third order, Francis preached in several parts of Tuscany, and received an establishment at Columbario, in a very solitary situation, which was the more agreeable to him from the great attraction he had for contemplation. He had it erected under the title of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, in honour of her divine maternity; he then returned to St. Mary of the Angels.

An abbess was requested from the monastery of St. Damian for that of Moncel, of the same institute, which was forming at Florence; he consulted thereon the cardinal protector, and by his advice he selected Agnes, the sister of Clare. Agnes, out of obedience, set out willingly; she found a very fervent, very united, and very submissive community, and the Sovereign Pontiff granted all that she required for their spiritual wants. But Agnes was seriously grieved to have to part from Clare, and to satisfy her heart, she wrote to her a most affectionate letter, full of the most tender sentiments, in which we see that the

feelings of nature are elevated and sanctified by virtue, instead of being weakened.

At that time, about the month of October, Francis obtained the famous indulgence of St. Mary of the Angels, or of Portiuncula, of which we shall here relate the circumstances, deferring the proofs to the illustrations which will be given at the end of this work.*

The great lights and inspirations which this holy man received in prayer, discovered to him the wretched state of sinners; he deplored their blindness, and was moved to compassion, and he often prayed for them. One night when he was soliciting their conversion from God, with great fervour, he was directed by an angel to go to the church, where he would find Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, accompanied by a host of celestial spirits. Greatly rejoiced, he went and prostrated himself to render due homage to the Majesty of the Son of God. Our Saviour said to him, "Francis, the zeal which you and your followers have for the salvation of souls, is such, that it entitles you to solicit something in their favour, for the glory of My name." In the midst of the marvels which enraptured him, he made the following prayer: "Our most holy Father, I entreat Thee, although I am but a miserable sinner, to have the goodness to grant to men, that all those who shall visit this church may receive a plenary indulgence of all their sins, after having confessed them to a priest; and I beg the Blessed

* An Appendix which does not form part of this translation. *Orat. Editor.*

Virgin, Thy Mother, the general advocate of human-kind, to intercede that I may obtain this my request." The Blessed Virgin did intercede, and Jesus Christ spoke the following words: "Francis, what thou askest is great, but thou wilt receive still greater favours; I grant thee this one; I desire thee, nevertheless, to go to My Vicar, to whom I have given power to bind and to loose, and to solicit him for the same indulgence." The companions of the saint who were in their respective cells, heard all these things; they saw a great light which filled the church, and the multitude of angels; but a respectful fear prevented them from approaching.

In the early morning, Francis assembled them, and forbad their speaking of this miraculous event, and then set out with Massé of Marignan, for Perugia, where Pope Honorius then was.

When he came into his presence, he said to him, "Most holy Father, some years ago, I repaired a small church (17) in your dominions; I beg you to grant to it a free indulgence, without any obligation of making an offering." The Pope replied, that the request could not reasonably be granted, because it was but just, that he who wished to gain an indulgence should render himself deserving of it by some means, particularly by some work of charity.(18) "But," added he, "for how

(17) He expresses himself to this effect, because the church of St. Mary of the Angels was near Assisi, and that the Duchy of Spoleto, of which Assisi is a part, was, as it still is, in the Ecclesiastical States.

(18) Michael de Medina, an excellent theologian, who assisted at the Council of Trent, says that in those times no Indulgence was granted without an obligation of giving alms towards gaining it; that these alms were employed to defray the expenses of the wars in the Holy Land, in

many years do you ask me for this indulgence?" "Most holy Father," replied Francis, "may it please your Holiness, not to give me so many years but so many souls." "And in what way do you desire to have souls?" rejoined the Pope. "I wish," added Francis, "that it may be the good pleasure of your Holiness, that those persons who enter the church of St. Mary of the Angels, are contrite, shall have confessed their sins, and have properly received absolution, may receive an entire remission of their sins,(19) as well in this world as in the next, from their baptism, to the time of their so entering the church." The Pope then said to him, "Francis, what you solicit is a thing of great importance. The Roman court has not been accustomed to grant any similar indulgence." "Most holy Father," returned Francis, "I ask not this from myself, it is Jesus Christ who sent me; I come from Him." Upon which, the Pope said publicly three times: "It is my desire that it be granted to you."

The Cardinals who were present, represented to him, that in granting so important an indulgence, he was subverting the throne of the holy law, and that of the sepulchre of the holy apostles. "The concession is made," replied the Pope, "nor is it right it should be revoked; but let us modify it."

repairs of churches, most of which were in a ruinous state, particularly in Italy: and that as to these last, they were called *manus adjutrices*. De Indulg. cap. ult. Edit. Venet. 1563.

(19) That is, of the punishment due to their sins; for the guilt of sin is remitted by the sacrament, and not by the Indulgence. St. Francis expresses himself here as the Popes do in their Bulls: "We grant a plenary Indulgence and full remission of all their sins to all the faithful who," &c.

And recalling Francis, he said to him; "We grant you this indulgence which you have solicited. It is for all years in perpetuity; but only during one natural day; from one evening, including the night, to the evening of the following day." At these words Francis humbly bowed down his head. As he went away, the Pope asked him, "Whither art thou going, simple man? What certitude have you of what you have just had granted to you?" "Holy Father," he replied, your word is sufficient for me. If this indulgence is the work of God, He will make it manifest. Let Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, and the angels, be the notary on this occasion, the paper and the witnesses. I require no other authenticated document." This was the effect of the great confidence he had in the truth of the apparition.

He left Perugia to return to St. Mary of the Angels, and midway he stopped at a village named Collé, at a leper hospital, where he rested awhile. On awaking he had recourse to prayer; then he called Massé, and said to him, with great exultation, "I can assure you that the indulgence which has been granted to me by the Sovereign Pontiff is confirmed in heaven." The day had not been fixed; it was not so, until the beginning of the year 1223, with other marvellous circumstances which will be hereafter related.

Clare wished to see once more the church of St. Mary of the Angels, in which she had renounced the world, and to take another meal with Francis, her spiritual father. He refused her his leave for

some time; but his companions having represented to him that he treated a virgin, whom he himself had consecrated to Jesus Christ, with too much harshness, he consented(20) to what she wished. An appropriate day was fixed on, and she came to the convent of Portiuncula, accompanied by some of her nuns, and some Friars Minors who went on purpose to the convent of St. Damian.

After having prayed fervently in the Church, and visited(21) the convent, the Friars and the nuns seated themselves round the refection which Francis had had laid out on the ground, in pursuance of his usual practice of humility, which was his daily observance whenever it was in his power. The first nourishment they took was for the soul. The holy patriarch spoke of God, but in so moving a manner, and with so much unction and animation, that all who heard him, were thrown into ecstasy, as he was himself. At the same time, the convent, the church, and the woods seemed to the inhabitants of Assisi and environs, to be on fire. Many ran thither to afford their aid; but finding everything in good order, they entered

(20) The first positive law which there is in the Church obliging nuns to enclosure is grounded on the Constitution of Pope Boniface VIII., cap. Periculoso de Stat. Regul. in 6, which was renewed by the Council of Trent. Sess. 25. de Regul. cap. 5. Thus Clare and her companions might legally go out of the monastery; besides which they had the leave of their superior. The Council even permits nuns to leave their convent for any legitimate cause approved by the Bishop.

(21) Although it has been strictly ruled not to permit females to enter into convents of religious men, yet the Holy See has nevertheless not hesitated to give such leave in special cases; these leaves have been recalled by Pope St. Pius V., and by Pope Gregory XIII., Const. 28, forbidding their entry under the severest penalties. It is not to be doubted that St. Francis, the founder and general of his Order, was empowered by Pope Honorius III. to allow the entry into his convents at his discretion.

the convent, where they saw, with still greater surprise, the whole assembly in a state of ecstasy. By that they were made aware that what had seemed to them to be a fire, was the type of the fire which inflamed these holy bosoms, and they returned greatly edified.

By this marvel the Lord clearly showed, that He approved the request which Clare had made, to be allowed to come to the Portiuncula ; as by another marvel He approved of the prayer which St. Scholastica made to detain her brother, St. Benedict, whom she wished to hear speak of the happiness of the future life, in the place in which they had just dined together.(22) Such was the condescension of His goodness for the consolation of these two saints, and it is thus that, according to the words of the prophet, "He fulfils the wishes of those who fear Him."(23)

The repast finished without any one having chosen to eat anything, so much were they filled with celestial aliment ; and Clare returned to the monastery of St. Damian, where her sisterhood received her with so much the more satisfaction, as they had been fearful that they would have given her the direction of some new establishment, as they had a short time before sent her sister Agnes to Florence as abbess. They knew that Francis had said to her on other occasions : "Be prepared to go wherever it may be necessary," and that she had obediently answered, "My father, I am ready to go whithersoever you may send me." Her having gone out seemed to them

[22) St. Gregor. Dialog. Lib. 2, cap. 33. (23) Psalm cxliv. 20.

a preparation for some longer journey, and their grief for having lost Agnes their dear companion increased the fears they had, lest they should lose Clare also, who was in their regard a most excellent mistress of spiritual life. But they had not, thereafter, any similar alarms; this was the only time in forty-two years that their holy mother left the enclosure.

Elias, the vicar general, gave Francis great uneasiness, by his erroneous views. Many of the Friars Minors came to see their patriarch, who received them with every mark of kindness. The vicar made great distinction between them. He was very particular in honouring those whom science and dignities rendered considerable in the order; he never failed giving them the first places, and he took care to satisfy all they needed; while he left the others in the lowest places, and often without attending to their necessary wants. In his station he did what the apostle St. James forbids all Christians to do, whether to rich, or to poor, he made a distinction of persons.(24)

Their common father, who could not endure that so great a difference should be made, particularly amongst persons of the same institute, affected one day at table, after grace had been said, to call two of the most simple of the brethren, and to place one on each side of him, without showing any attention to the merits of others. He did this, not because he disapproved of peculiar consideration being shown to those to whom it is due, according to the maxim of St. Paul,(25)

(24) James ii. 1.

(25) Rom. xii. 10, and xiii. 7.

in consequence of their character, their dignity, or their personal qualifications, but because he did not choose that these considerations should be to the disadvantage of those who had not similar circumstances to recommend them, and to whom, according to the same apostle, besides the feelings of charity to which they, and all others, are entitled, a certain degree of honour should be shown.

The Vicar general, who was not impressed with a similar way of thinking, was highly indignant at this act of the saint, and murmuring to himself, he said, "Ah! Brother Francis, it is quite certain that your extreme simplicity will be the ruin of the order. You place alongside of you, men who have neither learning nor talents, and you affront those who are the support of the order by their science." Francis, who by a supernatural revelation, was made aware of what his vicar had passing in his mind, replied immediately to his thought. "And you, brother Elias, you do much greater injury to the order by your vanity, and by the prudence of the flesh, with which you are filled. The judgments of God are impenetrable; He knows you as you are, and, nevertheless, He chose that you should be superior of the order; and it is His desire that I leave it in your hands. Alas! I fear that the people, and he who governs them, resemble each other, and that God has only given a pastor, such as He foresees the flock will be." The holy patriarch well knew that the whole of the flock would not be corrupted by Brother Elias, and that the majority of the mem-

bers would resist him, as it came to pass. And thus the fear which he experienced in general terms, was a warning to keep them all to their duty. But what he added was a true prophecy : " Unhappy man, as you are, you will not die in this order ; God has so decreed. You have been weighed in the balances, and have been found wanting,(26) because you are puffed up with the vain science of the world."

The following is the way in which this matter is related in the ancient legend which is followed by St. Antoninus.(27) Francis, knowing by a revelation that Brother Elias would die out of the order, and would be damned, avoided conversing with him, and even seeing him. Elias noticed this, and did not rest till he discovered the reason. Terrified and dismayed at such a prophecy, he threw himself at the feet of his kind master, and entreated him to intercede with God to prevent one of the flock committed to his care, from perishing eternally. " Let not the sentence which has been revealed to you, discourage you ; for the Lord(28) may change His decree if the sinner corrects his sin. I have such confidence in your prayers, my very dear father, that I should think they would mitigate(29) my sufferings even

(26) Dan. v. 27.

(27) St. Anton. Chron. part 3, tit. 24, c. 9, § 3, Wading. ad. ann. 1253.

(28) Novit Deus mutare sententiam, si tu noveris emendare delictum. St. Ambros. in Luc. lib. 2, n. 33, De Pœnit. Dist. 1, Cap. Novit Dominus.

(29) The common opinion of Catholics is, that the sufferings of the damned are never mitigated, although some of the most illustrious of the holy Fathers, who admit that they are eternal, as faith teaches, have nevertheless thought that prayers, almsdeeds, and the Sacrifice of the

if I were in hell, as you have been told I shall be. Pray for me, my father; pray, and I have no doubt but that God will modify His decree, and that I shall be converted." Francis prayed, and obtained from God that Brother Elias should not be damned, but he could not obtain the reversal of the decree which said that he should not die in the order. It was, in fact, out of the order that he died, but previous to his death he gave great signs of contrition, as will be seen further on.

Wading makes on this a judicious remark, worthy of a sound theologian. He says that Brother Elias, who was universally admitted to be a learned man, was not ignorant that the decrees of God which are absolute, are immutable, because He Himself is incapable of change; but he also knew that the Lord sometimes expressed Himself in absolute words against sinners, which decrees are merely threats, which may be changed by their repentance, without His changing, according to what He has said by the prophet Jeremy: "I will suddenly speak against a nation, and against a kingdom, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy it.(30) If that nation against which I have spoken shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil that I thought to do them." (31) Jonas sent from God, had positively announced that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, and nevertheless the penitence of the Ninevites

Mass, might afford them some mitigation. Father Petau, who quotes these with precision, remarks, that the Church never prays for the damned, and that she would do so, if she thought it could procure them any relief. Theol. Dog. tom. 5, De Angel.

(30) Jerem. xviii, 7 et 8. (31) Jonas c. iii.

hindered the destruction of their city. St. Gregory (32) says, that in this sense God changed His decrees, but did not change His design; and St. Thomas says,(33) that God proposes the change of certain things, but that in His will no change takes place. Sinners, however, must not abuse this doctrine, and imagine that God only threatens them, and that He will not damn them, for He has an absolute will to damn eternally those who die in mortal sin, as well as to crown with immortal glory such as die in a state of grace. In truth, it is His wish that sinners should be converted, and He places the means in their power by His mercy; "but," says St. Augustine, "He has not promised a to-morrow to your delay;" and as the apostle has it: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works." (34)

The example of the holy patriarch, who had sought, three times, the crown of martyrdom, and the triumph of the five brethren martyred at Morocco had inspired many with an ardent desire to die for Jesus Christ. Shortly after Elias had been restored as Vicar General, Daniel, minister in the province of Calabria, asked leave to go to preach the faith to the Moors, with six other brethren, whose names were Samuel, Donule or

(32) St. Greg. Moral. lib. xvi, cap.

(33) Id. Part. quæst. 19, art. 7.

(34) St. Aug. in Psalm cxli, n. 11. Rom. ii, 5, and 6.

Daniel, Leo Hugolin, Nicholas, and Angelus. Having received the permission of the Vicar General, and the blessing of Francis, they embarked in a port of Tuscany, from whence they sailed to Tarragona. Their first intention was to have gone to Morocco, to mingle their blood with that of their martyred brethren, but some reasons, probably favourable to their intention, induced them to go to Ceuta.

Daniel arrived first with three of his companions, the master of the vessel not having thought proper to take on board more. They lived out of the town, in a village inhabited by traders from Pisa, Genoa, and Marseilles, because Christians might not enter the town without a particular permission. Their occupation here was to preach to these traders, until they should be joined by their companions, who arrived there on the 29th of September.

The following Friday, which was the first of October, they consulted together as to their future plans, and the aids they should require in the formidable combat they were about to sustain. On the Saturday they confessed and received the Holy Communion, without which, when it is possible to receive it, St. Cyprian (35) would not suffer confessors to be exposed to martyrdom for the faith, because it is the Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ which gives the strength to endure it. St. Chrysostom and St. Bernard (36) also say,

(35) St. Cyprian. Epist. 54.

(36) St. Chrysost. Homil. 45. in Joan. and 24 in 1 ad Cor. St. Bernard in Cœn. Dei.

that it is the firmest defence which can be opposed to the temptations of the devil, and to the allurements of sin, which are powerful motives for having recourse to frequent communion.

The seven brothers went forth from the holy table, according to the expression of St. Chrysostom, (37) "as roaring lions, breathing fire and flames," and they could not restrain the zeal which animated them. On the evening of the same day they washed each other's feet, in order to follow the example of the Son of God, who washed His disciples' feet before His Passion; and very early on the Sunday morning, before there were any persons in the streets, they entered the town, having their heads strewed with ashes, and commenced crying out with a loud voice, "There is no salvation but through Jesus Christ." (38)

The Moors soon collected, abused and beat them, and led them to the king. The missionaries then repeated, in presence of the learned in the law, what they had previously said to the people, "That it was requisite to believe in Jesus Christ, that there was no salvation in any other name than His," which they proved by the most forcible arguments. The king, who fully understood that in thus upholding the name of Jesus Christ they rejected that of Mahomet, looked upon them as idiots, and thought that their shaven heads, with a crown of hair round them, was a proof of their folly. However, to prove their constancy, he had them confined in a loathsome jail,

(37) Id. ib. (38) Acts iv., 12.

where he kept them eight days in irons, and where they were cruelly treated.

Their confinement did not prevent their finding means to write to the Christians who were in the vicinity of Ceuta. Their letter was addressed to Hugh, Curé of the Genoese, and to two religious, one of their own order, and the other of the order of Friars Preachers, who had just returned from the farthest part of Mauritania. They blessed, in the first instance, the Father of Mercies, who consoled them in their tribulation ; and, after having quoted several passages from the Scriptures to justify their mission, and to animate themselves to suffering, they assured their brethren that they had borne witness, and strongly argued in presence of the king, "that there is no salvation but in the name of Jesus Christ ;" and they concluded by referring to God the glory of all that they had done.

The judge, whose name was Arbold, wishing to see what they did in prison, saw that they were no longer chained, that their faces shone with a splendid light, and that they sang the praises of God with extraordinary joy. The king having been apprised of this, caused them to be brought before him on Sunday, the tenth of October, and offered them great wealth if they would become Mussulmen. (39) They boldly replied, that they utterly despised all the things of this world and of the present life, in consequence of the happiness of the future life. They were then separated,

(39) This word signifies "true believers." It is the name which Mahometans give themselves, as one of honour. In the usual acceptation it means the followers of Mahomet.

and each was separately tempted, by promises and threats, but they were all found stedfast in their resolutions. Daniel, speaking with great energy, one of the Moors cut him across the head with his scimitar, from which he did not even wince, and another exhorted him to embrace the law of Mahomet to save his life with honour. "Wretch!" exclaimed Daniel, "your Mahomet and all his followers are but ministers of Satan, and your Koran is but a series of lies; be no longer misled, but embrace the Christian faith."

As soon as the seven brothers were collected together, six of them threw themselves at Daniel's feet, who had procured this mission for them, and who was their leader, and said to him with tears of joy,

"We give thanks to God, and to you, our Father, for having procured for us the crown of martyrdom; our souls will follow yours: bless us and die; the struggle will be soon over, and we shall enjoy eternal peace."

Daniel tenderly embraced them, gave them his blessing, and encouraged them by these words: "Let us rejoice in the Lord; this is for us a festival day; angels surround us, the heavens are opened to receive us; this day we shall receive the crown of martyrdom, which will last for ever."

In fact, the king seeing that they were resolute, and not to be shaken, condemned them to be beheaded. They were stripped, had their hands tied behind them, and were taken to the place of execution, whither they went as to a banquet, preceded by a herald, who proclaimed the cause

of their death, and where, after having recommended their souls to God, they were decapitated, on the tenth of October, (40) in the year 1221. (41)

Children, and other infidels, broke their skulls to pieces, and mutilated the remains of the holy martyrs, but these precious relics were gathered up by the Christians, and removed into the storehouse of the Marseillese, and were afterwards buried in their dwellings beyond the walls of Ceuta. It is asserted that some years afterwards they were transferred to the church of St. Mary, near Morocco, and that God manifested them by

(40) It was, according to some, on the 9th, and according to others, on the 8th of October. See Wading, ad ann. 1221, and the Franciscan Martyrol. 13 October.

(41) Wading maintains, upon good grounds, that they were martyred in 1221, in the lifetime of St. Francis. He proves this from an ancient manuscript entitled "Vinea Sancti Francisci," from which Surius has taken their acts; by the ancient Breviary of the church of Braga, in Portugal; by the ancient Breviary of the order of Friars Minors; by Maland, in his additions to the Martyrology of Usuard, and by Cardinal Baronius in his notes on the Roman Martyrology. Saint Antoninus is the first who has said that brother Elias gave them leave to go and preach to the infidels the year after the death of St. Francis, which was in the year 1227. He has been followed by some, but his testimony is not supported by any proof, and must not be preferred to the authority of a manuscript and two breviaries to which it is posterior. Thus it should not have been put in the breviary of the Order of St. Francis, printed at Paris, at the first lesson of the second Nocturn of the feast of these holy martyrs, "anno ducentesimo vigesimo septimo," and more particularly because the terms of the ancient breviary have been preserved in it. "Fratre Elia generali ministro, Patrisque Francisci tunc agente vices," which shows that Elias was Francis' vicar, and, consequently, that the patriarch was still alive; if Elias is called general minister, it is because he performed the functions of that office, and that the holy man gave him that title. The Breviary then, must be corrected in this particular, and anno ducentesimo vigesimo primo placed in lieu of the former date. We have since seen a breviary printed at Rome, in which the same date is mentioned as in the Paris edition. It should be seen whether the editors have stronger arguments for it than those of Wading.

miracles, and particularly by a splendid light, which even the Moors saw during the night ; and that some time afterwards an Infant of Portugal, having obtained them from a king of Morocco, had them removed into Spain, where fresh miracles rendered them celebrated. Whatever truth there may be in the account of these translations, it is not known now where the relics of these seven martyrs are. What is certain is, that the faithful had their memory in great veneration, and that in 1516 the Friars Minors solicited leave from Pope Leo X. to recite an office in their honour, which leave he most willingly granted to them, placing them in the number of martyrs recognized by the Church, as they are commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on the (42) 13th of October.

We may imagine the satisfaction their triumph gave to Francis, from the ardent desire he always evinced for the crown of martyrdom, and the tender love he bore for his children. He had, moreover, in this year another great consolation on this subject. Pope Honorius sent to almost all the bishops of Europe, desiring them to send him four men from each province, or at least two, noted for their science and the integrity of their lives, whom it was his intention to commission to preach to the idolaters, and to the Saracens, for whose conversion he was most anxious, and amongst the number thus selected there were many Friars

(42) Their feast has been transferred to the 13th October, on account of the Octave of St. Francis. Martyrol. of the Franciscans. Not. ad diem 13 October.

Minors, and Friars Preachers, who generously exposed themselves to every sort of peril for the salvation of souls.

The intimate union which the love of God had formed between St. Dominic and St. Francis, induces us to notice here, that the Blessed Patriarch (43) of the Dominicans died this year, on the sixth day of August, at the age of fifty-one years. (44) The eminent sanctity of his life, the great miracles he performed, particularly in raising three dead persons to life, and principally Napoleon, the nephew of Cardinal Stephen de Fossanuova, which was so extraordinary; the ardour and splendour of his zeal for the destruction of heresy, his inviolable attachment to the holy See, his tender piety to the Blessed Virgin, whom he causes to be generally and daily honoured in the devotion of the Rosary, and the establishment of his Order, so useful by its science, by its piety, and by the great services it had rendered to the

(43) Wading found his portrait drawn in the following terms in the "Legend of St. Francis," composed by order of Pope Gregory IX. and in another of the same date: "He was of a middle size, slender and well proportioned. His face was handsome, and countenance pleasing; his voice was sonorous, and his hands long; his hair, which adorned his whole head, was of a light colour, rather reddish, as was his beard. From his countenance and from his eyes there were flashes which were imposing, and called forth respect. A religious joy was observable in his looks, unless the compassion he felt for the miserable made him appear sorrowful." The same author adds, that the holiness of St. Dominic, his astonishing eloquence, and something majestic in his countenance, added to a virginal modesty, gained him the affection of the Spaniards, his countrymen, of the French and Italians, and of persons of every other nation, so that he acquired an ascendancy over their minds, and turned them as he pleased.—Wading, ad ann. 1221, n. 48.

(44) His feast was fixed by Pope Paul IV. for the 4th of August, because the 5th and 6th were already filled by other festivals.

Church, which must make it revered by all the faithful, cause him to be illustrious through the entire Church; and among the Friars Minors there is not one who, if animated by the spirit of St. Francis, must not have a special devotion for St. Dominic, and a respectful affection for those of his Order. (45)

Charity, which inflamed the breast of Francis, soon drew him from his retreat. He set out in the beginning of the year 1222, for the Terra di Lavoro, in Apulia and Calabria, and in the course of this journey God worked many splendid miracles by his hand.

Passing, first, through the town of Toscanella, on the road to Rome, he received hospitality from a knight, whose only son was lame in both legs, and was in a state of suffering through his whole body. The afflicted father asked him to procure the cure of his son from God; he abstained from doing this for some time out of humility, esteeming himself unworthy of being heard for others, but being prevailed upon by reiterated entreaties, he placed his hands upon him, and made the sign of the cross upon the boy, who at the same moment stood upright and firm on his legs, and was entirely cured, to the great astonishment of his whole family.

At Rome he made acquaintance, and became

(45) There must be no exception on this head; unless it was grounded on a letter of the Rev. Father A. Cloche, general of the Order, dated [illegible], given to a book printed at Paris, in 1727, entitled "La Solide Devotion du Rosaire." See the Mémoires du Trevoux, Sept. 1727. Nouvelles Litteraires, article d'Espagne.

intimate with a nobleman, named Mathew de Rubeis, of the illustrious family of the Orsini. One day, on which he had been invited to dinner there, and having got there at the appointed hour, not finding his host yet returned from town, he joined, unperceived, the poor to whom they were giving a meal, and he received the alms with them. The nobleman arrived shortly after, and inquired where Brother Francis was, and as they did not find him, he declared he would not eat his dinner if he did not come. While they were looking for him he saw him seated in the yard with a group of poor. He went to him, and said: "Brother Francis, since you won't dine with me I am come to dine with you," which he did, placing himself on the ground near him, and in the group, where he found himself very comfortable in that company. When he heard that the holy man had established a third Order for secular persons of all ranks, he prayed for admission into it, and had himself instructed in the practices to be observed. The consideration which his rank in life gave him in the world, threw great splendour on the new institution, and drew many persons to it.

There was a little child called John whom he requested Francis to bless; the servant of God gave him his blessing; he took him in his arms and foretold his father that he would bring great glory to his house, for that he would be Sovereign Pontiff. Then fixing his eyes upon the child, he spoke to him as if he had had the use of reason; he entreated him seriously, and in most affection-

ate terms, to be favourable to his order; after which the prophet continued as follows: "He will not be a Religious of our Order, but he will be its protector; he will not be reckoned among its children, but he will be acknowledged as its Father; and our brethren will be delighted at seeing themselves under his shadow. I consider the immense benefits we shall receive from this child, I see them already in his little hands." Such a prediction caused as much pleasure as surprise to the lord of the family of the Orsini, but he never spoke of it till he saw its fulfilment, which happened fifty-five years afterwards. His son, cardinal, under the title of St. Nicholas, was chosen Pope in the year 1277, and took the name of Nicholas III. His singular benevolence for the Order of the Friars Minors showed that its holy founder had not spoken in vain to him in his infancy.

From Rome Francis went to visit the grotto of St. Benedict. He considered with great attention the bush covered with thorns, into which the great patriarch of the monastic life had the courage to throw himself, in order to overcome a temptation of the flesh. (46) In admiration of such extraordinary fervour, he touched this bush as a sacred relic; he kissed it, and made on it the sign of the cross. God, in order to honour His two servants, (47) changed it immediately into a beautiful rose-

(46) St. Greg. Dial. lib. ii., cap. 2.

(47) This is what a poet has expressed in the following verses:
"Virgineum sepit florem Benedictus acutis
Vepribus, et proprii rore cruoris alit.

tree, the flowers of which have served in many places for the cure of the sick; the place has since been held in greater respect. In a chapel which is near it, and which was consecrated by Gregory IX., we see that Pope, with Francis on his left hand, who holds a scroll of paper, on which these words, taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, are written, "Peace be to this house," (48) words which he constantly used as a salutation.

The remainder of his journey was remarkable for many other wonders which were worked through his means, in announcing the word of God. While preaching at Gaeta, (49) on the bor- e r of the sea, seeing that a crowd of people were anxious, from a devotional feeling, to touch him, he threw himself into a boat to avoid these demonstrations of respect, which were disagreeable to him. The boat, which had no sailors in it, floated to a certain distance out to sea and then became stationary; from thence he gave instruction to those who were on the shore, and the crowd dispersing after having received his blessing, the boat returned of itself to its former place. St. Bonaventura exclaims on this: "Who after this

Hinc dumeta novas tanto fœcunda liquore,
Franciscique manu culta tulere rosas.
Falsa quidem roseo cecinere e germine Vates
Sed latuit falso carmine vera fides.
Scire cupis rosei flos exeat unde pudoris?
Sola rosas potuit gignere puncta Venus."

See Wading, ad ann. 1222, n. 5.

(48) Luke x. 3.

(49) Or Gaete, or Gaiete, a town in the Terra di Lavoro, in the kingdom of Naples, so called, according to Virgil, from the nurse of Æneas, who died there. Æneid, vii.

will have a heart so hardened and so irreligious as to despise the preaching of Francis, to which inanimate things lent their aid, as if they had reasoning faculties?"

The inhabitants of Gaeta, admiring the power which God gave to His servant, entreated him to stay some time in their town, and to permit them to build there a convent for his Order. He assented to this, and the work was commenced forthwith. While the church was in progress, a carpenter was crushed by the falling of a beam. As the other workmen were carrying him home, Francis, who was returning from the country, met them, and directed them to lay the dead man on the ground; he then made the sign of the cross on him, took him by the hand, called him by his name, and commanded him to arise. The dead man rose immediately and went back to his work. This is well-known in the country by successive tradition, and a small chapel has been erected, under due authority, on the spot where the miracle was performed, in order to perpetuate the memory thereof.

The earliest authors of the Life of our saint, record a very singular miracle which he performed on his route, in the house of a gentleman. All the inhabitants of the place were gone to the great square to hear him preach. A female servant who had been left in a house to take care of a child, wishing to hear the sermon, left the child alone. On her return she found the child dead, and half boiled in a copper of hot water, into which it had fallen. She took it out, and in order

to hide the disaster from the father and mother, she shut it up in a trunk ; the parents, however, learnt their misfortune, which was the more afflicting as this was their only child. The husband entreated his wife not to let her distress appear, out of respect for the servant of God, who was to dine with them. During dinner Francis endeavoured to inspire them with a holy joy, knowing what the Almighty had in store for their consolation, and at the end of dinner he feigned to wish to eat some apples. They expressed their regret that they had none to offer him ; but pointing to the trunk in which the child was shut up, he said : "Let them look there and some will be found." It was in vain that they assured him that there were none there, he insisted on having the trunk opened. The gentleman to oblige him, and with a view of hiding the object of their grief, opened the trunk, when, judge of his astonishment, on finding his child alive and well, and with a smiling countenance, holding an apple in each hand. Transported with joy he carried the child and placed it in the arms of the holy man.

The people of Capua were so moved by his preaching, and by the miracles he performed, particularly on his having saved from the waters a woman whom the river Volturnus had carried off, that the town made him the offer of a convent. St. Anastasius, Bishop of Civita di Penna, gave him another, with great marks of regard, after having gone out to meet him, on an inspiration he had in his sleep that Francis would come the next day to his town, a circumstance which is

recorded by a painting in the church, and is explained in two Latin verses. (50)

The servant of God having preached during the entire day at Montella, went to pass the night in a wood in the vicinity of that town, where he seated himself with his companion under an ever-green oak. (51) Some persons who passed by in the morning perceived that there was no snow where the two religious sat, although there had been a heavy fall in the night, and they related the circumstance to the lord of Montella, who sent for Francis, and entreated him to remain in that country, or to leave some of his companions amongst them, for the instruction of the people. He left two, for whom they built a house on the very spot where heaven had been so favourable to him, and the wood was sanctified thereby, which had previously been the resort of robbers.

The force which God gave to his discourses, and the miracles of which He made him the instrument, converted sinners, and animated the piety of the good. Both the one and the other were anxious to retain him amongst them, or, at least, to have some of his religious. In this journey alone he founded more than twenty houses, among which was one at Amalfi,(52) whither his devotion

(50) Cælitus admonitus Præsul Pennensis, it ultro :
Complexusque Patrem, dat quoque sponte locum.

(51) Marianus of Florence, quoted by Wading, ad ann. 1222, n. 14, says, that in his time, two hundred years after St. Francis, this ever-green oak was still alive, and that a Religious having cut it, because it impeded the view of the town, he fell immediately ill, and died in a few days, in great suffering. This shows that it is God's will that even the smallest memorials of the marvels He works in honour of His saints shall be respected.

(52) A town in the kingdom of Naples, the seat of an Archbishop.

had led him to honour the relics of the apostle St. Andrew. (53) The inhabitants of Agroboli, who at first had been deaf to his instruction, were penetrated with contrition, and gave him a convent, after having been reproached with the hardness of their hearts by a multitude of fish, that God caused to collect round a rock from which Francis preached those truths which this people had refused to listen to.

The Emperor (54) Frederic II. was at that time with his court at Bari. The servant of God went there, no doubt, to venerate the relics of the great bishop St. Nicholas ;(55) he preached in the town, and as his discourses were always made suitable to the wants of his auditors, he spoke energetically on the dangers of the court, and particularly against impurity. Some courtiers who heard him

(53) These sacred relics had been brought to Naples with those of St. Luke, in the year 357, on the 3rd of March, by the care of the Emperor Constance, and had been deposited in the church of the Apostles. Chron. Hier. ann. 357. Idat. Fast. ann. 356, 357. St. Hieron. in Vigilant. The French and Venetians having taken the city of Constantinople, in the year 1204, carried away a great number of relics, and Cardinal Peter, of Capua, Legate of the Holy See, had the body of St. Andrew, which he gave to the church of Amalfi, his native place. From that time St. Andrew has been the titular of that church, and the patron saint of Amalfi. The account of this translation is found in the 7th tome of "Italia Sacra," page 272. It is taken from the original, which is preserved in the Cathedral church. See the notes of Baronius on the Roman Martyrology of the 9th of May.

(54) The Emperor was, in fact, in Italy in the year 1222. Raynald. ad ann. 1222, n. 31 & 32, et ad ann. 1223, n. 1.

(55) The relics of this holy Bishop were brought to Bari, a maritime town of Apulia, on the Adriatic Sea, in 1087, by some merchants of that town, who had taken them from the town of Myra. God has honoured them by an infinite number of miracles, and one of the most celebrated pilgrimages is made to that place. Ourson, Archbishop of Bari, had the history of the translation and miracles written by John, Archdeacon of that church, in the year 1088. Surius places it on the 9th of May.

reported the circumstance to the emperor, who remarked that it often happened that those who did these things in private were the most violent in exclaiming against others in public; that it was not known whether this preacher was one of that sort, but, in order to ascertain it, he should be invited to supper, and a female should be secretly introduced into his bedroom; this was accordingly done, and the saint resorted to similar means to what he had used in the case of the Saracen female who had solicited him to sin in Egypt. He placed himself on red-hot coals, and invited the wanton to imitate him; she was so terrified at this, that she betook herself to flight. The emperor, who had had the curiosity to spy into what was going on, with some of his courtiers, through a chink (56) which was purposely prepared, went into the room, and said to Francis: "I see that God is with you, since the fire has not burnt you; you must be thankful to Him, and we will beg His pardon for having put you through such an ordeal." Then having dismissed those who were with him, he willingly listened to what the saint said to him on the subject of his salvation. But the evils which this irreligious and debauched prince did to the Church, in which the Friars Minors had a considerable share, and which their zeal for their mother brought upon them, are too clear proofs that what the saint said to him bore no profitable fruit.

(56) Wading says, that in order to preserve the memory of this event, the tower in which it occurred was called, and is still called, the Tower of St. Francis.

On leaving Bari, he found on the road a purse, (57) which appeared to be full of money. His companion, who was aware of his great charity, said that he ought to take it for the poor. Francis refused to do so, saying that it was only a snare of the devil, and that if it was really money which had been lost, it would not be right to take what belonged to others to give away in alms, so they continued their route. His companion was not satisfied; he thought that an opportunity was lost of doing a good action, and he tired Francis with his remonstrances. The holy man, who was very mild and very obliging, returned to the spot where the purse was, not intending to do what his companion wished, but to expose to him the artifice of the evil spirit. A young man was passing at the time, in whose presence he told his companion to take up the purse; he, trembling from a secret misgiving of what was about to happen, would have been glad not to have anything to do with it, but obliged to obey, he put his hand to it, which he had no sooner done than he saw a large snake slide out, who disappeared with the purse. On which Francis said to his companion, "Brother, money is, as regards the servants of God, but as a venomous serpent, and even the devil himself." We may here add, that it is the same thing for those who are too fond of it, and who avariciously keep it, or make it serve for the gratification of

(57) St. Bonaventura, Legend, cap. 7, says that it was a sort of deep purse, called, in the language of the country, Funda. It is thought that Macrobius uses this word in the same sense. 2 Saturn, cap. 4. See Ducange's Glossary at the word Funda, where he quotes St. Bonaventura.

their passions. A chapel, which has been built in that place, is a memorial of the teaching of the patriarch to the poor of Jesus Christ.

His devotion induced him also to visit the grotto consecrated by the apparition (58) of the Archangel Michael, on Mount Gargano.(59) They wished, out of respect, to take him to the very spot where the blessed spirit was manifested, and where mass is offered up, a privilege which is not allowed to all. But through humility he stopped at the door, and as he was urged to enter, he said, "I dare not go farther, this place is awful, it is the dwelling of angels, whom men should respect in all ways." The place where he stopped to pray is shown to this day. These sentiments of humility should abash those Christians who crowd round our altars in unbecoming postures, and particularly those worldly women who, in immodest postures, and an air of vanity, approach contemptuously the sanctuary in which the sacred Body of Jesus reposes.

Francis placed some of his religious near Mount Gargano, and in some other parts, after which he came to Gubbio, where he cured a woman, the sinews of whose hands were contracted.

Near Gubbio, a soldier called Benvenuto, asked to be admitted into the order; he was admitted

(58) The learned Mabillon is far from thinking as M. Baillet does; he has admitted the truth of this apparition, which is authorised by the traditions of the country, and by the Roman Martyrology of the 8th of May. See Acta, SS. Ord. S. Bened., Sec. 3, pars 1, p. 85, nat. A.

(59) Mount Gargano, now called S. Angelo's Mount, is in the kingdom of Naples, in the province of Capitanate, near Manfredonia, a town built from the ruins of Siponte.

as a lay-brother, with directions to wait upon the lepers. Profound humility, implicit obedience, an ardent charity, the love of poverty and of silence, assiduity in prayer, perfect patience in sickness, and a tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, rendered this soldier an excellent religious. God honoured him with so many miracles during his lifetime and after his death, which happened in the year 1232, that Pope Gregory IX. had information taken on the subject in 1236, through the bishops of Malfi, Molfetta, and Vedosa, and permitted these three dioceses to allot to him an office, which is now said by the whole order of Friars Minors on the 27th of June.(60)

There lived between Gubbio and Massa, an old advocate of the Roman court, called Bartholomew Baro, who had retired thither to avoid the tumults and dangers of the world, and lived in great reputation of sanctity. Francis, delighted at what he had heard of him, wished to see him. They discoursed on spiritual things, and Bartholomew hearing that there was a third order, willingly entered into it. The holy founder who saw that great prudence was associated with his consummate piety, placed confidence in him for the affairs of his order,(61) and left some of his religious with him.

(60) Raynald, ad. ann. 1256, n. 28. Martyr. Franc. 27 June.

(61) Although St. Francis had no lawsuits, and certainly would not have any, yet he knew very well that in the government of a Religious body, it was often necessary to seek information in Canonical jurisprudence, and sometimes even in the Civil. Thus the confidence he placed in this talented advocate for the affairs of his Order, shows the excellence of his judgment.

St. Antoninus relates,(62) that Bartholomew had in his hermitage a man possessed by the devil, who was incessantly talking, but who did not speak a word during the three days that Francis was there. After his departure he recommenced talking, and Bartholomew having asked him why during the stay of Francis he had kept silence: "It was," he said, "because God had so tied his tongue that it was out of his power to speak a single word." "How is it, then," replied Bartholomew, "is Francis so great a man, that his presence has such an effect?" "Truly," rejoined the demoniac, "his virtue is so great, that all the world will see in him most wonderful things. It is not long since our prince called us all together and told us, that God, who in all times had sent men for the conversion of sinners, has similar designs in regard to this man, and that Jesus Christ proposes to renew His passion in a pure man such as Francis is, in order to imprint it in the hearts from whence it is obliterated."

As this was said two years before Francis received the stigmata, it would seem that the prince of darkness had some knowledge of the favours(63) which Jesus Christ intended to confer on Francis. St. Augustine(64) says, that the Son of God made Himself known to the demons on earth, making certain signs to them, of His presence; but that it was only as much as He thought proper, and

(62) Chronic, part iii., tit. 24, cap. 7, § 3.

(63) Math. viii. 29. Luke iv. 34, and 41. Math. iv. 3.

(64) St. Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. ix., cap. 31. St. Thom. 1, a part. quæst. 64, art. 1, et in 2 sent. dist. 17, quæst. 2, art. 2.

that He made use of it when necessary to inspire them with terror, and that at other times He left them in doubt as to His Divinity. According to this doctrine it might be said that God, to confound the demons, had made known to their chief His intention to renew the Passion of Jesus Christ in the person of Francis, without informing him in what manner this was to happen, for it is certain that this spirit of darkness, neither by his natural lights, nor by conjectures, had the means of discovering a favour which solely depended on the Divine Will.

At length, having laboured for the salvation of souls with great fatigue nearly the whole year, the holy patriarch returned to his dear home, St. Mary of the Angels, to attend more immediately to his own sanctification. He there received Brother Cæsar of Spire, who had returned from Germany, and the subject of whose mission we must now resume, having lost sight of it since the year 1221.

This zealous missionary left Italy with twenty-seven companions, divided into small parties, and before the feast of St. Michael they arrived successfully at Trent, where they remained fifteen days, during which the bishop provided liberally for all their wants. On the day of the festival, Cæsar preached to the clergy, and Barnabas to the people. An inhabitant of the town, named Pellegrino, was so moved by Barnabas's discourse, that he had all the brethren newly clothed, and shortly afterwards he sold all his property, gave it to the poor, and took the same habit himself.

Cæsar left some of the brethren at Trent, exhorting them to the practice of patience and humility, and then set out with the remainder. In their way they attended with greater interest to spiritual than temporal wants, although they had commissioned some of their companions to provide what was necessary for them. The bishop of Trent, whom they found at Posen, detained them for some days, and gave them leave to preach in the whole of his diocese. From thence they went to Brixen, where the bishop received them very charitably; but from thence they had much to suffer in the mountains, where they could procure nothing to eat after long and fatiguing marches, and were reduced to feed upon wild fruits, and even they had a scruple of tasting these on Friday morning, because it was by their rule a fast, although they had slept in the open air, and had had scarcely anything to eat the preceding day. But God supported them, and they reached Augsburg, where the bishop embraced them all, and gave them special marks of his benevolence. They were equally well received by the Vidame, his nephew, who was so kind as to give up to them his dwelling. The whole of the clergy showed them great consideration. And among the people there were none who did not show them respect and affection, and their teaching did much good.

In 1221, near the feast of St. Gall, which is on the sixteenth of October, Cæsar assembled the first chapter of the order which had been held in Germany; there were about thirty of his brethren,

whom he distributed in several provinces of this vast country. Some were sent to Wurtzburg, Mentz, Worms, Spire, and Cologne, where they exerted themselves with much success for the salvation of souls, and built convents. Giordano was sent with two companions to Saltzburg, and the Archbishop of that city received them with great benevolence. Three others went to Ratisbon, where they founded one excellent establishment. The provincial followed them, animating them by word and example. While at Wurtzburg, he gave the habit of the Friars Minors to a young man of good family, named Hartmod, who had had a good education, and he called him Andrew, because the day of his reception was that of the holy apostle. And having taken holy orders some time after, he became a celebrated preacher, and was the first Warden in Saxony. Rodinger was also admitted into the order, who was afterwards warden of the convent of Halberstad, and director of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, before Dr. Conrad of Marburg.

In 1222, Cæsar having received a great number of novices, some of whom were made priests, assembled a chapter at Worms, and finding that the order was taking solid root in Germany, he instituted as vice-provincial, Thomas de Celano, and returned into Italy with Simon de Collazon, who had preferred the humble state of Friar Minor to the nobility of his birth. The reason of Cæsar's return was the anxious desire he had to see once more his holy patriarch, and his companions in the Valley of Spoletto, with whom he was inti-

mately united through virtue. He was a man greatly attached to contemplation, very zealous for holy poverty, and highly esteemed by his brethren, who, after their holy father, looked up to him above any other.

The religious whom he had left in Germany pursued their mission with great success. Even in this year, or shortly after, they penetrated, with the Friars Preachers, into the kingdom of Sweden, and into some other countries of the north, according to the testimony of John the great, archbishop of Upsal, and Legate of the Holy See,(65) who notices this circumstance in the History of his Church.

This prelate remarks, that one of the first who entered the institute of the Friars Minors, was Laurence Octavius, an illustrious man, whose conversion made so much sensation, that it drew into the order many persons of high rank. The poor habit which he wore, and which he honoured by his splendid virtues, and particularly the love of suffering, did not render it less venerable than his science, his eloquence, his prudence, and his great talent for preaching, which caused him to shine in the eyes of the world, and which had the effect of being of the greatest service to religion(66) throughout the country, as the historian remarks.(67)

Octavius could not avoid giving his consent in

(65) Hist. Ups., lib. ii., sub fin. (66) Ibid.

(67) The Swedes received the faith in the ninth century, but it did not spread through the whole country at the same time. Hist. Joan. Magn. lib. v., cap. 17. Baron. ad. ann. 826, n. 42.

the year 1244 or 1245, to the election which was unanimously made of his person by the clergy and people for the archbishopric of Upsal, which was confirmed by Innocent IV. In this dignity he continued to live the life of a true Friar Minor, and did so much for the salvation of his flock, as well as for the benefit of the whole kingdom, during the interregnum which followed the death of King Eiricbalde, and for the election of his successor, that if heresy had not destroyed in Sweden all sentiments of piety with the light of faith, his memory would still be honoured there as one of their greatest, as well as holiest persons. He died a saintly death in the year 1267, and chose to be buried among the Friars Minors, with whom he would have wished to have spent his life.

While the institute of St. Francis thus flourished in Germany and in the North, a treasure was discovered in Italy, which had been up to this time overlooked. It was the great St. Anthony of Padua who was leading a hidden life in the hermitage of St. Paul near Bologna.

His superior sent him, with some others, to Forli, in Romagna, to take orders. There were also some Friars Preachers there. Being assembled together at the hour of conference, the superior(68) of the place requested the Friars Preachers to give them an exhortation. As they excused themselves because they were not prepared, he turned to Anthony, and without being aware of

(68) An author says that it was the Bishop of Forli, whose name was Albert. Act. SS. Vit. Sanct. Anton., 13 June, p. 708, in Annot., litt. B.

the depth of his learning, he ordered him to say whatever the Holy Spirit should suggest to him. Anthony replied with great humility that he was ill fitted for such a task, and that he was much more qualified for cleaning the plates than for preaching. However, yielding to the superior's reiterated order, he began to discourse with simplicity and timidity; but God, proposing to place conspicuously the lamp which was hidden under the bushel,(69) he continued his discourse with so much eloquence, and showed himself to possess so profoundly learned a doctrine, that the audience was most agreeably surprised, and admitted that they had never heard anything to equal it; and they did not know which most to admire, his learning or his humility.

It was, indeed, requisite to be possessed of rare and extraordinary humility, to hide with so much care such sublime learning, and talents so varied; for Anthony had earnestly requested the guardian of the convent in which he was, to employ him in cleaning the plates and dishes, and in sweeping the house. This man, who, according to the saying of the apostle, was "a vessel of honour, sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared unto every good work,"(70) treated himself, and wished to be considered by his companions, as one of the vilest amongst men. He was deserving of the highest place, and took the very lowest. He was so deeply versed in the Holy Scriptures, that his memory served him as a book; and he penetrated

(69) Math. v. 15. (70) 2 Tim. ii. 21.

so well into the most obscure passages that he was the admiration of the most profound theologians; but he was more anxious to be confounded with the unlearned, and to be unknown, than to let his learning be discovered, and to appear capable of instructing others.

We may here notice a reflection of St. Bernard(71) on a somewhat similar case: "Let this passage be remarked by those who undertake to teach what they have not learnt themselves; seeking for scholars without having had masters; they are the blind leading the blind.(72) But justice is done them; although it is admitted that they have some talent, it is soon found that they have nothing solid, and they are treated with contempt."

The fortunate discovery that was thus made of the talents of Anthony, soon reached the ears of Francis, who ordered him to apply himself to the pulpit. He desired, however, that the preacher, in order to exercise his ministry with the greatest effect, should study theology at Vercelli, under the abbot of St. Andrew, who gave lessons with great reputation, and who is supposed to have been the celebrated Doctor Thomas, a canon regular of the abbey of St. Victor of Paris, who was sent to be the first abbot of the abbey of St. Andrew of Vercelli, which was founded about the year 1220. Anthony had for a fellow-student another Friar Minor, named Adam de Marisco, an Englishman, who was afterwards a doctor of the

(71) Vit. St. Malach. c. ii., n. 4. (72) Math. xv. 14.

university of Oxford, the holiness of whose life, whose learning, and whose writings, rendered him famous throughout the whole realm of England, and who was subsequently elected bishop of Ely.(73)

The application which Anthony gave to the study of theology, did not prevent his preaching during the Lent at Milan, and at other times in some parts of the duchy.(74) But his preaching was no hindrance to his studies, because the lights he had previously acquired, and those he received from above, together with his splendid talents, gave him an insight into the most sublime truths. His progress was so quick and so great, that his master often declared, that he learnt many things from his scholar. Speaking of the book of the celestial hierarchy which he was explaining, he said that his scholar ran over the several orders of blessed spirits with so much precision, and a penetration so surprising, that it might have been thought that the whole heavenly host passed before him. This exalted wisdom, joined to his eminent virtues, induced his illustrious preceptor to give him the name of Saint, and to apply our Blessed Lord's eulogy of St. John Baptist to him: "He was a burning and a shining light."(75)

Anthony was applied to by his fellow-students to communicate to them the learning in which he abounded, and to give lessons in the convent, but he would not take upon himself to exercise the

(73) Hist. Chron. Pedemont. cap. 36. Franc. Aug. à Basil. St. Petr. apud Act. SS. supra, p. 729, in Annot., litt. B.

(74) Litt. A. Wading. Scrip. Ord. Min. Act. SS. ibid. p. 730, litt. C.

(75) Joan. v. 35.

functions of master, without having first consulted the holy founder of the order. He wrote to him on the subject, and received the following answer:

"To my dear Brother Anthony, Brother Francis sends greeting in Jesus Christ.

"I entirely approve of your teaching the brethren sacred theology; in such manner, however, that the spirit of prayer be not extinguished in you or in them, according to the rule which we profess. Adieu."(76)

This is a proof that Francis was not hostile to study, but that he only wished it to be conducted in a religious manner, without prejudice to piety. Anthony, having obtained leave, taught first at Montpellier, and then at Bologna, where studies were again set on foot, to which disobedience had put a stop, as has been said; then he taught at Padua, at Toulouse, and in other places where he was stationed; always joining to this holy exercise, that of preaching with wonderful success.

At the time when he began taking lessons from the Abbot of Vercelli, the most celebrated doctor of the university of Paris took the habit of the Friars Minors. This was Alexander d' Halès, or d' Hels, or Hales, thus named from the place of his birth, in the county of Gloucester, where, from the year 1246, Richard, Earl of Cornwall, had founded

(76) Act. SS. supra, p. 728 et 730, in Annot. litt. F. Reg. Frat. Min. c. 5.

a convent of the order of Citeaux.(77) Having gone through his course of humanities in England, he came to Paris, where he studied philosophy and theology, took a doctor's degree, taught, and was universally admired.(78)

St. Antoninus(79) believes that what led to his vocation was, that having made a vow to grant, if he possibly could, whatever should be asked of him for the love of the Blessed Virgin, for whom he had a singular devotion, a person who was questing for the Friars Minors, came and said to him : "It is quite long enough that you have been labouring for the world, and you have acquired celebrity in it. I entreat you, for the love of God, and of the Blessed Virgin, to enter into our order, which you will honour and you will sanctify yourself." The doctor was surprised at this request, but God touched his heart, and he replied to the brother, "I shall follow you very soon ; and shall do as you wish:" and shortly after, he took the habit of a Friar Minor. Others, however, are of opinion, that he was induced to quit the world by the example of his fellow-countryman, John of St. Gilles, an illustrious doctor, who, preaching one day to the clergy with great energy, on voluntary poverty, in the convent of the Friars Preachers, descended from the pulpit in the middle of his sermon, and

(77) Others write this name D'Alès. In the Monasticon Anglicanum, on the subject of the foundation of this Monastery, Dugdale writes "In manerio de Hayles," and names it, "Haylesense monasterium. Monast. Anglic.," tom. i., p. 928, edit. 1682. In Latin he is called Alensis.

(78) According to the custom of those times, which was to give titles of honour to men of learning, he was called the Irrefragable Doctor; Doctor of Doctors; Fountain of Life. Wading ad. ann. 1245, n. 19.

(79) Chron. part iii., tit 24, ch. 8, § 1.

in order to give force to his words by his example, he took the habit of St. Dominic, and returned to the pulpit to finish his discourse.(80)

However this may be, the holy life and happy death of Alexander Hales in the order of St. Francis, bore testimony to his having been called by God. It is said that at first the practices were difficult to him, and that some interior suffering made him think of leaving the order,(81) but that, in this agitation, he saw in spirit Francis bearing a heavy wooden cross, and endeavouring to carry it up a very steep hill; that he offered to assist him, but that the holy patriarch spurned his aid indignantly, saying, "Begone, you feeble man; you have not the courage to bear your own light cross, and you would attempt to bear this heavy one." And this vision having enlightened the doctor, who was a novice, he was delivered entirely from the temptation under which he laboured.

He continued to teach with the same repute; and the faculty of theology, to do honour to his merits, gave him the privilege of presenting for a doctor's degree one of his brethren and disciples; which he did the first time, by an interior revelation, in favour of Brother John de la Rochelle, who afterwards became very celebrated.(82) Alexander had many other disciples distinguished both for their learning and their piety, but there are none who have done more honour to his instructions

(80) Hist. Angl. Harpsfield, Sæc. 13, cap. 11. Chron. Nic. Triv.: in Spicil Dacher., tom. viii, p. 573.

(81) St. Anton. supra. (82) Id. ibid.

than St. Bonaventura, and, according to the opinion of many authors, St. Thomas(83) Aquinas.(84) Among his writings, which are very numerous, and on all sorts of subjects, his Summa is much esteemed, in which, by order of Pope Innocent IV.,(85) he arranged methodically the theological subjects.(86) This is the first Summa which was compiled, and it has served as a model for all others. Pope Alexander IV.(87) spoke in the

(83) Both the Popes, Sixtus IV., and Sixtus V., notice in their Bulls that St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas were fellow-students. Cardinal Bellarmine, Possevin, and Labbé, of the Society of Jesus; Nicholas Harpsfield, Archdeacon of Canterbury, and John Pits, an English Doctor, Spond, and many others, say that these two saints were disdisciples of Alexander Hales. Bzovius, a Polish Dominican, speaks in precise terms on that head in his "Annales Ecclesiastiques," tom. 13. ad. ann. 1250, n. 11. "Discipulos ille (Alexander Halensis) habuit duos, Divos Bonaventuram et Thomam Aquinatem.

This is a circumstance in which there are many chronological difficulties. Some maintain it, others deny it.—The continuators of Bollandus, 14 July, Comment. præv. in Vit. St. Bonav. § 3, are puzzled by the contradictory evidence produced by Wading and by Echard, and they do not decide the difficulty. On this, as on the opinions of the schools, people may dispute, but it should be with good temper. In consequence of not having adhered to this principle, Father Noel Alexander was blamed by his own friends in 1680, and Echard by the authors of the "Mémoires de Trévoux," in 1722.—See Supplem. de Script. Eccles. P. Casim. Oudin. p. 510. Mem. de Trévoux, 1722. Jan. Art. 3.

(84) Wading ad ann. 1245, n. 19, et seq.

(85) Trithemius, Bellarmine, Possevin, Labbé, and many others, say this: and it is the more probable, as certainly Pope Alexander, or his successor, ordered the Superiors of the Friars Minors to complete the Summa which Alexander Hales had in dying left imperfect.

(86) Assermet. Theol. tom. ii. Quæst. Procem.

(87) Echard gives us the Brief of Alexander IV. Script. Ord. Prædic. tom. i. p. 321, col. 1. In it the Pope directs the Superiors of the Friars Minors, in virtue of holy obedience, to complete the Summa of Alexander Hales; he says that this Summa is a river, having its sources in Paradise, a treasure of science and wisdom, full of irrefragable sentences, which crush falsehood by the force of truth, that it is highly useful to those who seek to make progress in the knowledge of the divine law: that it is the

highest terms, both of the author and of his work.

Gerson, chancellor of the university of Paris, in speaking of Alexander's doctrine, expresses himself as follows: (88) "It is not to be told how many excellent things it contains. I declare to having read in a treatise, that some one having asked St. Thomas what was the best mode of studying theology, he replied, 'to study the works of a single theologian;' and being asked what theologian it was desirable to fix on, he named Alexander Hales. Thus, continues Gerson, the writings of St. Thomas, and principally(89) the Seconda Secondæ, show how familiar the works and doctrine of Alexander were to him."

So that learned men entered the order of

work of God, and can only be attributed to celestial wisdom; that the author could not have composed it without having been full of God, and inspired with the Holy Spirit. Popes Sixtus IV. and Sixtus V. have not given less praise to the doctrine of St. Bonaventura; and other Sovereign Pontiffs have given similar praise to that of St. Thomas. They had in view the doctrine of the Church, explained, cleared up, and methodically propounded by those illustrious Doctors for the instruction of the faithful, and for confuting heretics; and in no ways private opinions, upon which they frequently differ, and which the Church thinks proper to leave open to the Schools as long as they have nothing in them which does not disagree with orthodox dogmas. See the 9th letter of the author of "Reflexions sur le Bréf de notre Saint Père le Pape Benoit xiii, aux Dominicains," addressed to the author of "Thomisme Triumphant," p. 40, 1727. This letter and the preceding ones were printed at Yprès, with approbation, by P. I. Rave.

(88) Gerson in Epist. de Laudibus Bonav. tom. 1. p. 554. Edit. Paris. 1606, et Edit. nov. tom. 1, p. 117.

(89) This passage is of itself sufficient to prove A. Hales composed a Summa of the virtues, and that Gerson had read it. Many authors reckon it among his works, and T. de la Caille, in his "History of the Press," says that it was printed at Paris, by J. le Petit, in 1509. If it is not now to be found, it is only the fate of many other works besides that one.

Friars Minors, as St. Francis had foretold; and this is the reason why he recommended that prayer should be joined to study, lest learning should obliterate piety.

The indulgence granted to St. Mary of the Angels, or the Portiuncula, two years previous to this time, had not yet had the day fixed on which the faithful could gain it. Francis waited till Jesus Christ, who first conceded so precious a boon, should Himself mark the day, nor was he disappointed. It occurred as follows:

One night when he was praying in his cell at St. Mary of the Angels, in the beginning of the year 1223, the tempter suggested to him not to watch and pray so much, but rather to adopt other modes of penance, because, from his age, more sleep and rest was absolutely necessary for him, and these watchings would be his death. Being aware of the malice of his infernal enemy, he retired to the woods, and threw himself naked into a bush of briars and thorns, till he was covered with blood. "For," said he to himself, "it is much better that I should suffer these pains with Jesus Christ, than that I should follow the advice of an enemy who flatters me."

A brilliant light which surrounded him, discovered to him a great number of white and red roses, although it was the month of January, and the winter was very severe. This was an effect of the power of God, who had changed the briars into rose-trees, which have ever since been evergreen and without thorns.

Angels, who appeared in great numbers, said to

him: "Francis, hasten to return to the Church, Jesus Christ is there, together with His blessed Mother." At the same time he perceived himself miraculously clothed with a new habit of pure white; he gathered twelve roses of each colour, and went to the Church. After a profound adoration he addressed the following prayer to Jesus Christ, under the protection of the most Blessed Virgin: "Most holy Father, Lord of heaven and earth, Saviour of man, deign, through Thy great mercy, to fix the day of the indulgence which Thou hast been pleased to grant to this sacred place."

Our Lord answered him, that it was His desire that it should be from the evening of the vigil of the day when St. Peter the apostle was delivered from his chains, to the evening of the following day. Francis, again asking in what manner this should be publicly made known, and whether his own assertion would be given credit to, he was directed to present himself before the vicar of Jesus Christ, to take with him some white and red roses as testimonials of the truth of the fact, to take with him some of his brethren, who would testify to what they had heard; for from their cells, which were near the church, they had indeed heard all that had been said. Then the angels sang the hymn 'Te Deum laudamus.' Francis took three roses of each colour in honour of the most Blessed Trinity, and the vision disappeared.

This wonderful vision was attested to by his companions; but it is only necessary here to remark, that the critics, who are hostile to all that

is marvellous, cannot say that there is anything in this which is incredible. At the marriage of Cana our Lord changed water into wine. (90) At his transfiguration "his garments became white as snow," (91) that is to say, brilliant as the shining light which emanated from his whole body. At His birth a multitude of the heavenly army appeared to the shepherds, "praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest," &c. (92) Could He not, then, in honour of His servant, change the briars into rose-trees, and clothe him with celestial light, to manifest the purity of his soul, and cause the angels to sing a hymn of the Church in thanksgiving for the favour He had just granted to man? In the revelation of the relics of St. Stephen, the first martyr, which was made to Lucian, a priest of the Church of Jerusalem, which is one of the most celebrated events of the fifth century, and which has ever been considered so true and credible a narrative, that the universal Church has assigned a special festival in its commemoration on the third day of August, when the relics of the holy martyr are seen as shown to Lucian by the blessed Gamaliel, under the figure of a golden basket filled with red roses; and in order to point out the bodies of other saints which were in the same place, other golden baskets were shown to him filled with white roses. Now, if it pleased God to represent the martyrdom of St. Stephen (93) by red

(90) John ii. 9. (91) Matt. xvii. 2.

(92) Luke xxiii 13, 14.

(93) Epist. Lucian. De Revel. Corp. Steph. Mart. n. 4, ad Calc. tom. Oper. St. Aug.

roses, and his charity, which was the cause of it, by a basket of gold, could He not also choose that the appearance of white and red roses in the middle of winter should be a miraculous proof of the indulgence which He granted to Francis, and the whole together a sensible representation of the effect it produces, which is, to purify souls by the application of the merits of Jesus Christ, according to the words of the Apocalypse: "They washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (94)

Francis, accompanied by Brothers Bernard de Quintavalle, Peter of Catania, and Angelus of Rieti, set out for Rome, where he related to the Pope all that had happened at St. Mary of the Angels, in proof whereof he presented to him the roses he had brought, and his companions testified to what they had heard. The Pope, astonished to see such beautiful and sweet-smelling roses in the depth of winter, said: "As to myself, I believe the truth of what you tell me, but it is a matter which must be submitted to the cardinals for their opinions." In the meantime he directed his attendants to see that they should not want for anything.

The next day they came before the Consistory, where Francis, by the Pope's desire, said, in presence of the cardinals, "The will of God is, that whosoever shall, with a contrite and humble heart, after having confessed his sins, and received absolution by a priest, enter the church of St. Mary of

(94) Apoc. vii. 14.

the Angels, in the diocese of Assisi, between the first vespers of the first day of August and the vespers of the second day, shall obtain an entire remission of all the sins he may have committed from his baptism until that moment." The sovereign Pontiff seeing that the words of Francis were not thought to have any deceit in them, having conferred with the cardinals thereon for some time, confirmed the indulgence. And he subsequently sent to the bishops of Assisi, Perugia, Todi, Spoleto, Foligno, Nocera, and Gubbio, to meet at the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, on the first of August of that year, and there solemnly to publish this indulgence.

All these prelates met on the day specified, and having mounted a large platform, (95) which had been prepared outside of the church, they made Francis mount there also, to explain to the assembly, which was very numerous, and gathered from all parts of the country, the cause of their meeting. He spoke with so much fervour that it seemed to be rather an angel who addressed the meeting than a man, and he ended his discourse by announcing the plenary and perpetual indulgence which God and the sovereign Pontiff granted to this Church every year on that day. The bishops were not satisfied with his publishing it to be in perpetuity. "Brother Francis," they said, "although the Pope desires us to do on this occa-

(95) Wading says that they still preserve, respectfully, pieces of the wood which supported this platform, and they are shown through a grating under the altar in a beautiful chapel, which has been built on the spot, near which is a garden of rose trees, evergreen, and without thorns. Ad ann. 1223, n. 2.

sion whatever you wish, it is not, however, his intention that we should do things which are not suitable ; therefore you must give notice that the indulgence is only to last for ten years." The Bishop of Assisi was the first to restrict it to this time, but he could not help saying, as St. Francis had, "in perpetuity." The other bishops endeavoured successively to announce this restriction, but God permitted that, without intending it, they should all say "in perpetuity." By this they were made sensible of the will of God, and willingly proclaimed the indulgence to be perpetual.

Many of those who were at the sermon preached by Francis have left testimony in writing to the effect, that he had in his hand a small scroll on which was written these words: "I wish you all to go to Paradise. I announce to you a plenary indulgence which I have obtained from the goodness of our heavenly Father, and from the mouth of the sovereign Pontiff. All you who are assembled here to-day, and with a contrite and humble heart, have confessed with sincerity, and have received absolution from a priest, will have remission of all your sins ; and in like manner those who come every year with similar dispositions will obtain the same. I wish it had lasted eight days, but I could not obtain it."

Such is the way in which the famous indulgence of St. Mary of the Angels, or of Portiuncula, was published on the second day of August, an indulgence which the sovereign Pontiffs have

since extended to all the Churches of the Order of St. Francis.

The seven prelates consecrated the Church of St. Mary of the Angels, and performed a similar ceremony for the Church of St. Damian, at the request of Francis and Clare, and the remembrance of this is commemorated yearly at Assisi on the ninth of August.

The benevolent feeling which Honorius III. expressed to the holy patriarch, when he was at Rome, for the indulgence of the Portiuncula, induced him to wish that this Pontiff would authorize solemnly the Rule of the Order, which Innocent III. had only verbally approved, and he had in the night the following revelation, which is thus recorded by St. Bonaventure.

It seemed to him that he had taken up from the ground some very small crumbs of bread, in order to distribute them to the half-starved brethren who surrounded him, and how, fearful lest such small crumbs should fall out of his hands, a heavenly voice said to him : " Francis, collect all these crumbs and make a host of them, and give of it to such as wish to eat of it." He did so, and all those who did not partake of it devoutly, or treated it contemptuously after having received it, seemed to be infected with leprosy. In the morning he related all this to his companions, and was distressed at not comprehending the mystery. The following day, while he was at prayer, a voice from heaven said to him : " Francis, the crumbs of last night are the words of the

Gospel, the host is the Rule, and the leprosy is iniquity.

The term of host, to designate the Rule, is worthy of particular consideration. Its import is, that as bread without leaven, which is called the host, is made of the finest flour, so the Rule is composed of what is most perfect in the Gospel; and as this bread, by the words of consecration, is changed into the body of Jesus Christ, the true host immolated on the altar, so those who make profession of the Rule, must be transformed into hosts, or victims, and immolate themselves to God. It is thus that St. Paul warns Christians "to become as a new paste without leaven," (96) and to pass the whole time of their lives as a continual festival, "presenting their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." (97) St. Peter also says to these, that they are a "spiritual house, a holy priesthood, (98) to offer up

(96) 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. (97) Rom. xii. 1.

(98) Luther concluded from this that all Christians are by their baptism truly Priests, and have power to administer the Sacraments, even to consecrate the Body of Jesus Christ. Other innovators have since endeavoured to persuade the Laity, and particularly females, that all the faithful who assist at Mass consecrate with the Priest, and they have purposely given them the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin and the Vulgar tongue, in order that each one might pronounce the words of consecration; so that there have been women who really believe that they consecrated. The Catholic Church teaches that this power is only given to Priests by virtue of their character; that they alone are the successors of the Apostles in the Priesthood, and that to them alone in the persons of the Apostles Jesus Christ said: "Do this in memory of me." When St. Peter said to the Christians that they were a holy assembly of Priests, he speaks of a purely spiritual priesthood, taken in a very extended sense, which consists in a self offering as a victim, by prayer and good works; which the Apostle calls spiritual victims. Such is the general and common Priesthood which, is proper for all the faithful, and not the Priesthood, which is peculiar to

spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (99)

The Oracle of heaven communicated to Francis that the Rule which he sought to have approved, and which was composed of sentences from the Gospel, required abridgment, and putting into order with greater precision. In order to effect this, he was inspired, after the publication of the indulgence, to go to Mount Columbo, near Rieti, where he retired into an opening in the rock with brothers Leo and Bonzio, fasting on bread and water; and this fast, according to the statement of Marianus, lasted forty days. There he wrote the Rule, according to the dictation of the holy Spirit to him in prayer. On his return to St. Mary of the Angels, he put it into the hands of his vicar, Brother Elias, to read it, and keep it. Elias thought it too severe, and some days afterwards, in order to suppress it, he feigned to have lost it by negligence. The holy man returned to the same place, and wrote it out a second time, as if God had dictated it to him with His own mouth.

The Vicar General communicated to some of the provincial ministers what had happened, and told them that the founder was desirous of imposing upon them a stricter mode of life than that to which they had hitherto adhered. They concerted together what they should do to avert this, and it

and appertains solely to Priests. Luther De Miss. privat. De captiv. Babylon. De institut. minist. Eccles. Concil. Nic. can. 14. Concil. Trident. sess. 22. cap. 1, Bellarmin. de Sacram. in gen. cap. 24, 25.

(99) 1 Petr. ii. 5.

was agreed that Elias, as Vicar General, should go and represent to him the inconvenience of such increased austerity, and the objections of his brethren. Elias, who was aware of the firmness of Francis in these matters, and had been severely rebuked by him on other occasions, acknowleged that he did not dare execute this commission alone, but he offered to accompany them for the common cause, and they consented to this arrangement.

While they were drawing near to the mountain, Francis had a revelation of what was passing. When they had reached the top, he left the opening of the rock quickly, and demanded of Elias what he and all these ministers who were with him wanted. Elias, with downcast eyes, and trembling, said, in a low tone of voice: "These ministers having learnt that you were about to give them a new rule above the strength of man to endure, have engaged me to come here, in my capacity of Vicar General, to entreat you to modify it, because they will not receive it if it is too austere."

At these words the saint in great emotion, and shuddering, raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed: "Lord, did I not say that these people would not believe me? As to myself, I will keep this Rule to the day of my death, with those of my companions who love poverty; but I shall not have it in my power to compel those who do not choose it, and who make so much resistance."

Jesus Christ appeared in a luminous cloud above Francis, and said, so that all heard him, "Little

man, why are you discontented, as if this was your work? It is I who have dictated the Rule; no part of it is yours. I insist on its being literally observed to the very letter, to the very letter, without gloss or comment. I know what frail man can endure, and what support I can and will give him. Let those who will not keep the Rule leave the order, I will raise up others in their place; and if it be requisite, I will bring them forth from these stones." (100)

Then Francis from the top of the rock, on which he had knelt down, addressed these words to the Vicar General, and to the others, who were greatly alarmed, "You now know that your conspiracy has been solely an opposition to the will of God, and that instead of taking into consideration what He can do for us, you have only consulted the feeble light of your human prudence. Have you heard, have you yourself heard the voice which came forth from the cloud, and which spoke so audibly? If it did not resound in your ears I will take steps to cause you to hear it once more." Upon this Elias and his companions, astounded and beside themselves, retired without saying a single word.

The holy patriarch having returned to join his faithful children in the small fissure of the rock, in which they lay prostrate at the voice of the Lord, said to them: "Rise up now, and fear nothing, but as true soldiers of Jesus Christ put on the armour of God, in order to be on your

(100) Matt. iii. 9.

guard against the snares which the devil will not fail to throw in the way of your following Him." (101) He left the mountain and went to the nearest convent to show the Rule to his brethren, intending to communicate it afterwards to the others, in order to know what each one thought of it. His countenance, animated and shining, was a manifestation that God Himself had dictated to him the rule of life which he proposed to them. It was a striking representation of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai, his face shining brightly. (102) The resemblance cannot be too much admired in its several relations. Moses, after a fast of forty days, received on a mountain the Law which God gave him. (103) Jesus Christ having fasted forty days, was on a a mountain when He taught that doctrine which embraces, as St. Augustine observes, all the perfection of the Christian life. (104) And it was on a mountain that it was His pleasure to give His servant Francis, who fasted rigorously, a Rule in which the perfection of the evangelical life is contained, as if it was intended to show, as the holy Fathers think, by the elevation of the place, the sublimity of the sort of life. These fortunate resemblances are undoubtedly most honourable to the patriarch and his children, but the glory is to God alone.

Some having read the Rule, said to Francis,

(101) Eph. vi. 1.

(102) Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30. (103) Ibid. v. 28.

(104) Math. cap. iv. 2. et cap. v. 1. et seq. St. Aug. de Serm. Dom. in monte, cap. i. n 1.

that it was necessary that his Order should have something in common, as the other religious Orders had; seeing that the number of the brethren was already very great, and that, according to all appearance, the Order would be so extended that it would not be possible to exist in so restricted a state of poverty. The saint returned to the place he had left, and having had recourse to prayer, he consulted Jesus Christ, the true Legislator, who gave the following reply: "It is I who am their portion and their inheritance, I do not choose that they should be encumbered with the things of this world. (105) Provided they adhere strictly to the Rule, and that they place their confidence in me, I will take care of them; I will not suffer them to stand in need of anything necessary to life, the more their numbers increase, the more will I manifest my providence to them." (106)

We must here render to that adorable and loving Providence the justice due to it. It has never been wanting to the order of St. Francis, and they have never had greater proofs of His care than when they have chosen to live most poorly. We see verified to the letter, in these poor evangelical brethren, the imitators of Jesus Christ crucified, what is said in the twenty-first psalm, in which the Son of God has clearly foretold His Passion: "The poor shall eat and shall be filled, and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him, their hearts shall live for ever and ever." (107) Were He now to ask the religious of St.

(105) Psalm. xv. 5. (106) Psalm. liv. 25.
(107) Psalm. xxi. 28.

Francis, as He asked the apostles : " When I sent you without purse, or scrip, and shoes, did you want for anything ?" (108) There is not one who would not answer as they did : " No, we have not wanted for anything." For a poor evangelical brother is bound to consider himself as not wanting anything while he lives, and to look upon having nothing but what is necessary as the treasure of his state of life.

A religious order which, without any revenue, maintains many thousand men, was a subject of admiration for an infidel prince, and the founder was considered by him as a very great man. He was not aware of the cause of this wonderful effect, but religion teaches us that it is God Himself who provides for the wants of His servants, by the charity with which He inspires the faithful.

Francis communicated to the ministers what our Lord had said to him. They submitted to everything, and returned with him to St. Mary of the Angels, where the Rule was approved by the brethren who were there, and was sent into the provinces to be examined before it was submitted for confirmation. It contains twelve chapters, of which the following is the substance.

The first chapter is expressed in these terms : " The Rule and the Life of the Friars Minors consist in the observance of the Gospel of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without property, and chastely. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to our most Holy Father

(108) Luke xxii. 35, 36.

Pope Honorius, and to his successors canonically elected, and to the Roman Church. Let the other brethren be bound to obey Brother Francis and his successors."

We have before noticed the Catholicity of the holy man, it is here seen, and it will everywhere be seen with similar zeal. The words, "Let the other brethren," &c., were not in the first rule, although Francis being the founder of the Order, and Pope Innocent having appointed him general thereof, the brethren were bound to obey him. But there is reason to think that he inserted them here, in consequence of the resistance of the Vicar General, and some provincial ministers, who made some difficulty in accepting the Rule; besides which, it was necessary to notice the obedience due to the General of the Order and his successors.

In the second chapter he speaks of the reception of novices, which he leaves solely to the provincials, who are to examine them strictly as to the Catholic faith, and the sacraments of the Church. He desires the postulants may be told to sell all they have, and to distribute it to the poor, if possible, but that they are not to interfere in this distribution. Noticing in particular the habits of the novices, and of those who are professed, he recommends that in general all shall be poorly clad, and shall be able to patch their own habits; he permits shoes to be worn in cases of necessity, which shows, says St. Bonaventura, (109) that the Friars Minors, except in cases of

(109) St. Bonav. Exp. in Reg. c. 2. et Tr. de sand. Apost.

extreme necessity, should be barefooted, as Jesus Christ had prescribed to the apostles. (110) He warns the brethren not to look with contempt on, and not to judge those who are delicately clad, and who are daintily fed: "Let no one judge or despise any one but himself."

The third chapter embraces three things; 1st. That the clerks shall recite the Divine Office, according to the practice of the Roman Church; that the laity shall recite for each part of the Divine Office a certain number of times the Lord's Prayer, (111) and pray for the dead. 2nd. That besides the periods directed by the Church, they shall all fast from the feast of All Saints till Christmas, (112) and all the Fridays throughout the year, which he prescribed in memory of Christ crucified, the great object of his devotion. He also proposes to his brethren a fast of forty days,

(110) It is thus that the holy Doctor understood the passage of St. Matthew, x. 10. and that of St. Mark, vi. 9. as St. Jerome and St. Augustine had, followed by many learned expositors. St. Hier. in cap. 10. Math. et in Epist. ad Agerach. et in Epist. ad Eustoch. de custod. Virgin. St August. de Consens. Evangel. lib. ii. cap. 30. Tostat. in cap. 10. Matth. Quæst. 60. et alii.

(111) St. Francis does not add here the Angelical Salutation to the Lord's Prayer, because at that time it was not in the Divine Office. It was not prescribed to the lay brothers in the Statutes of Guigues, General of the Carthusians, nor in the Rules of the Templars, or of the Carmelites. Mabillon remarks after Cardinal Bona, that it is only found in the Breviary of Cardinal Santa Croce, before that of Pope Pius V., and Cardinal Bona thinks that it was not in the long office, because it was in the little office of the Blessed Virgin, which was said from the 10th century. Bona, de Divinâ Psalmodiâ, cap. 16, § 2. Act. SS. Ord. S. Bened. sec. 5, Præfat. n. 117. et seq. The Lay brothers of the order of St. Francis do not, however, omit to add the angelical Salutation to the Lord's Prayer in their office.

(112) It was formerly a common custom amongst the faithful to fast at those times.—See Thomassin Traité des Jeûnes.

beginning with the Epiphany, and he invites them to this, promising them the blessing of God for it; but he leaves them at liberty on this head, and says, that in cases of evident necessity they are not obliged to corporal fasting, by which he shows that a spiritual fast must be kept at all times, according to the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, (113) and that of the Fathers of the Church. 3rd. He exhorts them to have no discussions or disputes, and not to judge others when they go into the world, but to be meek, peaceable, modest, tractable, and humble, and to speak civilly to all persons, according to the rules of politeness. He forbids their riding on horseback, unless illness or an evident necessity compel them to it. He directs that in whatsoever house they may enter, they shall say: "Peace to this house;" (114) and he permits them to eat, according to the Gospel, whatever may be offered to them.

What he had most seriously at heart is developed in the fourth chapter. That the brethren shall not receive money on any pretext whatsoever. He forbids this expressly, in conformity to what our Saviour said to His apostles: "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses." (115) Nevertheless, he orders superiors to provide carefully, by means of spiritual friends, for the clothing of their brethren, for their wants in sickness, as they shall deem it requisite, according to the seasons, the places, and the cold climates; always

(113) Esaias lviii. 3, et seq. St. Basil Homil. 1. et 2. de Jejun. St. August. Serm. 205. n. 3. et alibi.

(114) Math. x. 12; Luke x. 5 et 8. (115) Math. x. 9.

having regard to what has already been said, that they are not to receive money.

By the expression, "spiritual friends," (116) the holy founder means those persons to whom the Friars Minors address themselves in confidence as to friends in God, and whom they request to pay for what they cannot get without money. Now, notwithstanding the aversion and sort of horror which he had of money, he desires to have his spiritual friends induced to give it, or cause it to be given for clothing his brethren, and for assisting them in sickness, when these things cannot be obtained in any other way, in order to show the better by that, how far the obligation of the superiors extends on this head. If, then, a superior of the Order of St. Francis neglects to provide for his brethren the clothing they may reasonably require; if in their illnesses he does not give them that succour which fraternal charity dictates; if he does not procure for them all the solace and comfort which are desirable: if he were to have recourse to spiritual friends, and made use of their charity for less essential and less needful objects, he could not act in a manner more in opposition to the views of the holy patriarch, and in greater contravention of the Rule; he would violate the two great precepts, of the love of God and of his neighbour, even the laws of humanity; he would subject the brethren to severe and dangerous trials, which might affect their salvation, and he would not avoid the dread-

(116) Pet. Marchant. Expos. litt. in Regul St. Franc. cap. 4.

ful sentence which Jesus Christ will pronounce against those who shall have neglected Himself, naked and sick, in the persons of the poor. (117)

Labour is recommended in the fifth chapter, but with this remark, That they are to occupy themselves in it in such manner as by avoiding idleness, which is hurtful to the soul, the spirit of prayer and devotion be not extinguished, to which all temporal objects are to be made subservient.

On this head the Order of the Friars Minors, and the other mendicant orders, were attacked in the days of St. Bonaventura and St. Thomas Aquinas, by some learned men, who pretended that these religious ought to labour with their hands rather than to exercise the sacred ministries. But these two renowned theologians replied with arguments so strong and so solid to the reasoning of these critics, that it is surprising that it has been since attempted to repeat them. (118)

St. Bonaventura (119) in particular, pointed out to them that personal labour is not a precept of the Rule of the Friars Minors, but that it was recommended by St. Francis to avoid idleness, and that he himself had worked so little, that nothing was ever found of his personal labour during his whole life that was of the value of a sixpence; these are the precise words of the holy doctor, to which he added, that the lay brethren were sufficiently occupied in the convent, and out of

(117) St. Math. xxv. 41, 45.

(118) St. Thom. Opus. 34. alias 19. contr. imp. Relig. c. 5.

(119) St. Bonav. de Tribus Quæst. ad Magist. in nom. Expos. in Reg. cap. 5. Determ. Quæst. circ. Regul. St. Franc. Quæst. 11.

the convent, for the service of the community, and that as to the priests, it was much better that they should apply themselves to study, and to other spiritual exercises, which are proper to their state, than to the labour of their hands. In fact, it would be ridiculous to say that doctors, preachers, confessors, and priests, who spend their lives in singing the praises of God, and lending their spiritual aid to their neighbours, and clerks, who study in order to qualify themselves to serve the Church, should be obliged to learn a trade in order to labour at it.

It was in vain that the Book of St. Augustine on the Labour of Monks was referred to in reply, (120) since he only speaks of monks, that is, of solitaries by pofession, who were not employed in the sacred ministries, and because in his retractations he says positively that he only wrote against those monks who did not choose to do anything at all, and who asserted that in their state of life they were not required to labour, misapplying some passages of the Holy Scriptures to authorize their idleness. Moreover, he admits that those who preach the Gospel may live by the Gospel, and are not obliged to perform manual labour. (121)

If St. Paul, (122) who served the altar, nevertheless worked for his maintenance, it was because he did not choose to assert his right, for particular reasons which related to the good of his mission.

(120) St. Aug. Lib. ii. Retract. c. 21.

(121) Id. de Oper. Monach. c. xx. n. 23 et 24.

(122) Act. xviii. 3; et xx. 34.

(123) In similar cases his example should be followed, as it has been by many holy bishops and priests, according to the testimony of St. Epiphanius. (124) But the apostle did not lay it down as a law, he proves that the preachers of the Gospel should be supported by the faithful. As to his having added manual labour to his ministry, St. John Chrysostom makes no other remark than the following: "We who often forego the ministry of preaching should blush at the idleness of our lives." (125) This great preacher humbly made the reproach to inactive ministers, a defect of which he certainly was guiltless.

The Friars Minors are forbidden in the sixth chapter to possess any property whatsoever, (126)

(123) 1 Cor. iv. 12. et ix. 12. et alibi.

(124) St. Epiph. Hær. lxxx. 5. 6.

(125) 1 Cor. ix. 7, et seq. St. Chrysos. Homil. 39. in Act. Apost.

(126) The author of the History of the City of Paris, who has been before quoted, in speaking of St. Francis and his first disciples, says: "That the spirit of their institute was to have no property whatever, either in common or individually, not even the houses in which they dwelt. For which reason, he adds, they only received them as borrowed, and considered the property as that of the founders. For the subtle reason had not then been urged, as it was in the following century, by several Doctors who wished to make either the Pope or the Roman Church proprietors of the convents of the begging Orders, so that neither the one nor the other would have been either richer or poorer." Tom. i. lib. 6. p. 285. This writer ought to have known that the religious of St. Francis profess to this day not to have any property, either in common or individually, neither house, nor anything else whatsoever. He ought not to have been ignorant that the Sovereign Pontiffs Nicholas III. and Clement V. have made known, in conformity with what had been done by their predecessors Gregory IX., Innocent IV., and Gregory X., that they took to themselves, and for the Holy Roman Church all property given to the Friars Minors, and particularly the Churches and Grave-yards. How then could he attribute to the subtilty of Doctors an arrangement expressly notified in the Constitutions received by the universal Church, inserted in the code of Laws, and renewed in 1625 by Pope Urban VIII., with order to conform to it, without

neither house, nor place, nor any other thing. It is desired that they should consider themselves as strangers in this world, that they may serve the Lord in poverty and humility, and that they solicit alms with confidence, without feeling any shame in the act, since Jesus Christ became poor in this world for the love of us: "My dear brethren," says St. Francis, "such is the excellence of this sublime poverty, that it makes you heirs of the kingdom of heaven; it has stripped you of the goods of this world in order to make you great in virtue. Let this be your practice; this is what leads you to the regions of the living; bind yourselves, therefore, entirely to it, and for the name of Jesus Christ never wish for anything but the kingdom of heaven." He then adverts to the sincere and tender friendship which the brethren should feel towards each other, disclosing to each other, with confidence, their wants wherever they may meet. "For," says he, "if a mother nourishes her son according to the flesh, with how much more affection should each one love and nourish his brother according to the spirit? And if any of these fall sick, the others

noticing any others? That the property in things of which the Friars may have the use, belongs to the Pope, or to the Sovereign of each state, or to those who give them, and who wish to preserve the right over them; that as long as these exist they may be taken back, and the Friars have no legal means of preventing it; and they are even deprived of the power of going to law about it. It must be admitted, that *in reality*, this poverty in community is greater than where the right is retained of defending the property belonging to the community. The Proprietors of the houses of the Order of the Minors *are richer from it*, since they may always resume what belongs to them; besides that as Pope Nicholas III. says, their charity merits an eternal reward, and the Minors are *the poorer*, since they are always exposed to give back what does not belong to them.

must attend to him as they would wish to be attended in similar circumstances." This is what Jesus Christ taught: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them." (127)

The reasoning which St. Francis enters into to demonstrate with what affection his brethren must love each other and lend their aid to each other, is very solid and very pathetic. From the love a mother has for a son according to the flesh, and from the care she takes of him, he draws this consequence—that they must love their brethren still more according to the spirit, and take much more care of them. The consequence is correct, says St. Bonaventura (128) Love, which has charity for its basis, is stronger than that which proceeds from flesh and blood, because charity having an infinite object for its basis, all that is finite cannot withstand it; it overcomes even the natural fear of death. In fact, charity inspires greater tenderness, renders more careful and more active, gives more fortitude and more constancy than any other love. May the children of the blessed patriarch have it always in their hearts, and manifest the proofs of it to their brethren. They are all obliged by their rule to render mutual services to each other in their illnesses, as much as it may be in their power, and permitted by obedience. The obligation is particularly binding on those to whom the care of the sick is confided by the superiors; but it is principally imposed on the

(127) Math. vii. 12.

(128) St. Bonav. Expos. in Reg. cap. 6.

superiors themselves, who are the servants of the others by their position, and who are bound to see, by continual vigilance, that the sick are properly taken care of. It is a most important duty which St. Bonaventura(129) considers to be included in these words of the Son of God: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another;"(130) and the fulfilment of this duty increases the charity which prescribes it, according to the words of wisdom: "Be not slow to visit the sick, for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love."(131)

The seventh chapter only relates to those penances which are to be imposed for grave faults; on which subject the superiors are admonished not to be discomposed, and not to be moved to anger by the sins of others, since that destroys charity both in themselves, and in the brethren.

The eighth chapter treats of the election of the Minister-General, and of the assembling the general and provincial chapters.

The ninth directs, that the preachers shall not preach in a diocese if the bishop is opposed to it; nor before having been examined and approved by the Minister-General; that their discourses shall be examined and corrected; that they must study for the instruction and edification of the people, preaching upon virtues and vices, on eternal punishment and glory, and all this in few words. St. Bonaventura(132) says, that by this last circum-

(129) St. Bonav. Expos. in Reg. Cap. vi. (130) John xiii. 35.
(131) Eccl. vii. 39. (132) St. Bonav. in cap. ix. Regul.

stance, St. Francis means that everything that is useless to the subject, should be expunged from their sermons, and he adds, that this should be literally understood and acted upon, for, that sermons which are too long are fatiguing, and disgust the audience.(133) The one agrees with the other; for sermons are not too long when nothing is said but what relates to the subject, and when too many heads are not introduced. He also remarks: 1st, that the Friars Minors are to study preaching as part of their state of life, since their rule dictates to them the manner in which they are to preach. 2nd, That it was the intention of their Father that they should study, since he desires that their discourses should be accurate and corrected, which they cannot be without study.

The superiors and inferiors are instructed in the tenth chapter, the former as to the mode of governing, the latter as to obedience, and the holy patriarch exhorts all to the practice of the most sublime virtues. He desires that those who are illiterate shall not give themselves the trouble of studying, which St. Bonaventura says is to be understood of the lay-brethren, to whom study is unnecessary.(134)

In the eleventh chapter there are some prudent precautions in regard to women, and particularly as to religious women, in order that no suspicion may attach to the Friars Minors.

(133) A writer has observed that St. Augustine, when he was advanced in years, preached shorter sermons than when he was young, not to fatigue his audience by too much instruction. Tillemont's Memoirs, tom. xiii, pp. 248, 249.

(134) St. Bonav. in cap. xii. Regul.

The twelfth chapter is written under the impression that the Friars Minors will be sent to preach to the infidels, which has been the case since the very beginning of the order, until the present day; but it is recommended to the superiors only to permit those to go whom they shall deem best qualified. The sainted legislator in directing, out of obedience, to the ministers to solicit from the Pope, a cardinal of the holy Roman Church, as protector of the order, says, "In order that being always submissive to this holy Church, and prostrate at its feet, always firm and steady in the Catholic faith, we may practise poverty and humility, and practise the law of the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we have faithfully promised."

Such is the rule of the Friars Minors, reduced to twelve chapters from twenty-three, which formed the number of the first rule. It is short, but replete with evangelical perfection. If it be wished to have a good and ample commentary on it, it will only be requisite to study the actions and works of the holy founder.

Speaking of the rule, he said to his children, "I have not put anything into it of my own; I caused it all to be written as God revealed it to me;" and he adduced this motive to excite them the better to keep it. He confirmed the revelation in his will, in the following terms: "When the Lord confided to me the guidance of the brethren, no one communicated to me how I was to behave towards them, but the Almighty Himself revealed to me that I ought to live according to

the form prescribed by the Gospel; I caused it to be written out in few and simple words," &c.

This is the eulogium he passed on it: "My brethren and my dear children, a very great favour was done to us in giving us this Rule. For it is the book of life, the hope of salvation, the pledge of glory, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of the cross, a state of perfection, the key of Paradise, and the bond of our eternal alliance. None of you are ignorant how greatly advantageous to us holy religion is. As the enemy who fights against us is extremely clever in inventing and executing every thing which is malicious, and strews in our way all sorts of snares to effect our perdition, there are many whose salvation he would have brought into great peril, if religion had not been their shield. Study, therefore, your rule, all of you, not only for alleviating your pains, but in order that it may remind you of the oath you have taken to keep it. It is necessary that you should employ yourselves in meditating on it, that it may sink into your hearts, be always before your eyes, so that you may observe it with exactness, and hold it fast at your deaths."

St. Bridget being in prayer at Jerusalem, where she was interceding for a Friar Minor, who had some conscientious scruples on the subject of the Rule, our Saviour caused her to hear the following words: "The Rule of St. Francis was not the composition of the human mind; it is I who made it; it does not contain a single word which was

not inspired by My Spirit; and thus he gave it to the others."(135)

Pope Nicholas III.,(136) says, that it bears on the face of it, the evidence of the Trinity; that it is descended from the Father of Light, that it was taught to the apostles by the example, and by the doctrine of His Son, and that the Holy Ghost inspired it to the blessed Francis and to those who had followed him. He also declares, as Gregory IX. had done before, that it is established on the word of the Gospel, authorized by the Life of Jesus Christ, and supported by the actions and words of the apostles, who founded the Church militant. It consists, according to the remark of St. Bonaventura,(137) in observing the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, because all its substance is taken from the pure source of the Gospel. It is, therefore, no new Rule, it is only a renewed Rule; literally the same as what the Son of God laid down for the apostles, when He sent them forth to preach; and this is what must give great spiritual consolation to those who keep it. This holy doctor(138) considers the impression of the wounds of Jesus Christ, which Francis received from the hand of the living God, some time after the revelation of the Rule, as a bull of Jesus Christ, by which that high Pontiff confirmed it; and Pope Nicholas III. was of the same opinion in his Decretal.

(135) Revel. Sanct Brigitt. lib. vii, cap. 20.
(136) In Sexto de Verb. signif. Exiit qui seminat.
(137) St. Bonav. Expos. in Reg. Fr. Min. cap. i.
(138) Id. Leg. St. Franc. cap. iv.

Finally, the Rule of the Friars Minors, given by St. Francis, is wholly evangelical,(139) and wholly apostolical; there never was one which was so universally and so promptly followed. Men, illustrious by their birth, by their knowledge, by their talents, by their virtue embraced it, and have followed it during more than five centuries, in all parts of the Christian world; it has given to the Church a new family, in numbers most extensive, whose fecundity does not become exhausted, and it has produced a great number of saints. (140)

The children of the patriarch, having most willingly received it, he left them in the month of October, in order to solicit the approval of the Sovereign Pontiff. When at Rome he was invited

(139) Upon this principle some have asserted that the Rule of the Friars Minors is a Divine law, and cannot be done away. This requires explanation. If it is looked on as extracted from the Gospels, it cannot be denied that it is a Divine law, and independent of any human authority, since the Gospel is the Word of the Son of God. It is for this reason that Cardinal John of St. Paul said to the other Cardinals in presence of Pope Innocent III., as we have related: "If we reject the request of this poor man under the pretext of his rule being a novelty, and too hard to be kept, let us be careful that we do not repudiate the Gospel itself, because the Rule, of which he solicits your approval is in conformity with what the Gospel teaches." But if this Rule is considered a form of life prescribed for a particular Order, and applied by the Pope, it is clear that it is not a divine law, and that for adequate reasons a Pope may suppress it, as in other cases. Alvar. Pelag. de Planct. Eccles. lib. ii, cap. 61. Emman. Roder. Quæst. Regul. tom. i, Quæst. 4, art. 1. Wading. ad ann. 1223, n. 14. Joan. Perrin. Doct. Paris. Supra Dispens. Fr. Min. Petr. Marchant. Expos. Litt. in Reg. FF. Min. Quæst. 3. proem. et fundam. duod. part 1 titul. 4, p. 55, et seq.

(140) Our holy Father Pope Benedict XIII. has canonized two others, the 10th and 28th of December, 1726; the Blessed James de la Marche and the Blessed Francis Solano. On the 9th of the same he created Father Lourmer Cogga, General of the Order of St. Francis, a Cardinal, and the following day he canonized a Saint of the same Order.

to dine with Cardinal Ugolino, the protector of the order, who had a sincere affection for him; but he did not come to the invitation until he had begged some pieces of bread, as he was accustomed to do, when he was to dine with persons of rank. Being at table, he drew this bread from his sleeve and began to eat of it, and he gave some to the other guests, who partook of it from devotion. After dinner the Cardinal embraced him, and said, smiling, "My good man, why, as you were to dine with me, did you put the affront on me, to go and beg bread first and bring it to my table?" "My Lord," replied Francis, "far from doing anything to affront you, I did you honour, in honouring at your board a much greater Lord than you are, to whom poverty is very agreeable, especially that which goes as far as voluntary mendicancy, for the love of Jesus Christ. I have resolved not to give up in favour of false and passing riches, this virtue which is of royal dignity, since our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for us,(141) in order that by His poverty we might become rich and heirs to the kingdom of heaven in our quality of poor in spirit."(142)

An admirable reply, which is quite in unison with what was said by St. Gregory Nazianzen. "If I am reproached for my poverty, I am sure that it is my treasure;"(143) and with these words of St. Ambrose, on the birth of Christ, "His poverty is my patrimony; He chose to want for

(141) 2 Cor. viii. 9. (142) Math. v. 3.

(143) St. Greg. Naz. Orat. 28, n. 33.

everything, in order that all others might be in abundance."(144)

The Cardinal presented Francis to the Pope, that he might solicit the confirmation of his Rule. The Holy Father read it, and finding it too severe, he desired some changes might be made in it; but the man of God protesting by everything that was most sacred, that he had not put a single word into it, but that Jesus Christ had dictated it, as it there stood; the pontiff upon this discussed it with the cardinals, and confirmed it.(145) His Bull commences thus:

"Honorius, bishop, the servant of the servants of God. To our dearly beloved sons, Brother Francis, and other brethren of the order of Friars Minors, health and apostolical benediction. The Apostolic See is accustomed to assent to pious intentions and to favour the laudable wishes of those who solicit her favours. For which reason, our dear children in Jesus Christ, we confirm by apostolical authority, and we strengthen by this present writing, the Rule of your order, which was approved(146) by Pope Innocent of glorious memory, our predecessor, expressed in these terms."

After having gone through it all, he concludes

(144) St. Ambr. in Luc. lib. 2. n. 41.

(145) Wading says that a part of the hall in which the Rule was confirmed, is now the chapel of the Friars Minors, Penitentiaries of St. John Lateran. Ad ann. 1223, n. 16.

(146) This must not be understood literally, but, according to the sense, for the whole substance of the first rule, which Pope Innocent III. had approved verbally, is found in the second rule, which was approved by the Bull of Pope Honorius III.

as follows: "Let no person, therefore, have the temerity to violate the contents of our present confirmation, or to contravene it. Should any one dare to do so, let him know that he will incur the indignation of Almighty God, and that of His blessed apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul. Given in the Lateran palace, the twenty-ninth day of November, 1223, the eighth of our pontificate."

The original of this Bull, with its leaden seal, is preserved at Assisi, in the convent of St. Francis, where Wading saw it in 1619, with a copy of the Rule written by St. Francis' own hand.(147)

The Pope at the same time issued another Bull, addressed to the prelates of the Church, in which, having noticed that according to the Rule of the Friars Minors no one may be admitted to profession till after a year's probation, and that no one once professed may leave the order, he makes known that he has given the superiors power to excommunicate such as shall leave it, and he enjoins all bishops to consider them as such, and to denounce them if requisite, in order to compel them by this means, to return to the order. There are always tares among the wheat,—(148) wicked with saints in religious congregations, as indeed in the whole Church; God permits this for good reasons, and this should not diminish the esteem and respect which are due to the body.

The same Pope had granted in 1222, at the request which Francis had made to him in the

(147) Wading in 2 Regul. Sanct. Franc. Argum.

(148) Math. xiii. 27.

name of the whole order, that they might be allowed to say the divine offices in a low tone of voice, and with the doors of their churches closed in times of general interdicts. This concession is dated from Agnani, the 29th day of March, in the sixth year of his Pontificate. On the same day he sent a commission to the superiors of the Friars Preachers and Friars Minors of the diocese of Lisbon, where they were already in great repute, to reform, with some others, certain abuses which had been adopted by the clergy in the administration of the Sacraments. The favour which Francis had solicited for the times of interdicts makes it clear that he was not averse from having some privileges, and that his children do not act in opposition to his spirit, when they solicit them for legitimate causes.

We must not delay recording here, that in 1224, Honorius III. granted permission to the Friars Minors to use portable altars for the celebration of mass; that in 1225, some bishops in France having set themselves up in opposition to this, the Holy Father wrote from Rieti to the Archbishop of Rheims to remove these obstacles; and some other prelates having been still more averse from their having this privilege, so as even to have pronounced sentence of excommunication against the religious of the order, and against those who should receive them, he wrote to the bishops of Paris and Tournai, to put a stop to the excesses which he did not hesitate to qualify as rash.

While Francis was still at Rome, he proposed to himself to celebrate the festival of the nativity

of our Lord Jesus Christ at Grecio, with all the solemnity possible, in order to awaken the devotion of all in that vicinity. He wrote a letter on the subject to his friend, John Velita, begging him to prepare all things ; and in order that there should be no room for censuring what he was about to do, he spoke to the Pope about it, who approved highly of this pious ceremony, and granted indulgences to those who should assist at it.

St. Bonaventura informs us, that, before his departure from Rome, he went to pay his respects to Cardinal Leo Brancaleone, titular of Santa Croce, with whom his friendship began in 1210, when he first came to have his Rule approved. This cardinal invited him to stay some days in his palace, because the severity of the weather and the floods might impede his journey ; it was the month of December. He retained, to remain with him, with Francis' leave, Brother Angelo Tancredi, whose miraculous conversion we have related ; at that time there were but few of the cardinals who did not wish to have some of the Friars Minors in their company; such was the veneration they had for their virtue at the Roman court. Francis, however, found excuses for not spending more than two or three days in the palace of Brancaleone, saying that it was not fitting for the poor to dwell in the palaces of princes. The cardinal told him that he would receive him as a pauper, and give him a bed, not in his palace, but in an adjacent tower near the city walls, quite out of the way of any noise, where he might repose from his fatigue for some time. Tancredi entreated

him not to refuse this satisfaction to a prince of the Church, who was a person of great piety, and a generous benefactor to the order; therefore, out of respect and from gratitude, he consented to stay, and with his companion took up his abode in the tower.

The following night, when he was about to take some repose, the devils came and beat him so long and so violently, that they left him half dead. He called his companion, and told him what had happened and he added, "Brother, I believe that the devils, who can do nothing without the leave of the Almighty, have ill-used me to this degree, because of my having remained with great people here, if so, it augurs no good. My brethren who dwell in very poor houses, knowing that I am the guest of cardinals, might suspect that I enter willingly into the concerns of the world, that I glory in honours, and that I am living daintily. I therefore think that a man who is to be an example to others, should leave the court, and dwell humbly with the humble, in places adapted to the profession of humility, in order that he may inspire those with fortitude who suffer the inconveniences of a life of poverty by suffering with them." In the morning he took leave of the Cardinal, and set out for Grecio.

It is necesary here to remark, that St. Francis, who permitted some of his brethren to remain with the Cardinals, did not think that he himself, who was the superior, ought to spend a single night in their palaces, lest others should be disedified thereby, and that it was his duty to give good

example to all. This shows how much persons in power should strive not to do anything calculated to give bad examples, and to abstain from certain things which, though irreprehensible in themselves, and which would not be animadverted on in an individual, might be a cause of scandal in one in high station, who ought to be a model of virtue. On this principle St. Paul said to the Christians ; "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify ; (149) I do all for your edification." He recommended his disciples, Timothy and Titus, whom he had ordained bishops, to be "an example to the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity, in the practice of good works."(150) St. Gregory, St. Bernard, and all the holy fathers, have always required of prelates, as a primary qualification, that they should greatly edify, which is the more necessary in the superiors of religious communities, as their example is under more immediate observation.(151)

The bad health of Francis, the beating which he had received from the devils, and a constant fall of rain, compelled him to ride on an ass. During his journey he dismounted to say the Divine Office standing ; he remained on the same spot without paying attention to the rain, and did

(149) 1 Cor. x, 22, 23 ; 2 Cor. xii. 19.

(150) 1 Tim. iv. 12 ; Tit. ii. 7.

(151) St. Greg. in Job. lib. ii, cap. 3. et Reg. Past. lib. ii. cap. 16. n. 27, Edit. Bened. St. Bernard in Cant. serm. 76, n. 9. De Div. serm. 35, et 100, et alii passim.

not mount till he had quite finished. We shall speak on a future occasion of his respect, piety, and great attention in the performance of this holy exercise.

Having reached Grecio, he found all things prepared for the celebration of the festival by his friend Velita. They had prepared a crib in the wood, in which was represented the Nativity of our Saviour; they had placed straw there, and during Christmas night they took there an ox and an ass. Many Friars Minors had been collected there from the neighbouring convents, and the people of the environs came in crowds to the ceremony. The wood was lit up by numerous torches, and resounded melodiously from the sound of a thousand voices, who sang the praises of God with untiring zeal. Francis, full of devotion, and with his eyes bathed in tears of holy joy, knelt before the manger, above which an altar had been placed, where mass was celebrated at midnight; he acted as deacon, and after having sung the Gospel, he preached on the birth of the new-born King, become poor, and to whom, from a sentiment of great affection, he gave no other name, when he alluded to Him, than that of the Child of Bethlehem.

Velita, who had prepared the ceremonial, assured them that he had seen a most beautiful child in the manger, who was asleep, and whom Francis tenderly embraced in order to awaken it. There is so much the more reason for giving credit to this marvel, says St. Bonaventura, that he who relates it as having been an eye-witness of it, was

a very holy man, and that it was confirmed by many miracles ; for the straw on which the child appeared to be sleeping had the virtue of curing various maladies amongst cattle ; and what is still more wonderful, those who came to visit the spot, however tepid and indevout they may have been, were inflamed with the love of God. After the death of the saint, a chapel was erected on the spot, and the altar was placed on the manger, in order that the flesh of the Man-God immolated on the cross might be eaten on the spot on which He had chosen to appear as a sleeping Infant.

After the ceremony Francis retired to the convent of Grecio, where some of the Provincial Ministers had collected, who had come thither to communicate to him the affairs of their respective provinces. The refectory had been set out in a better style than usual, with napkins and glasses, not only on account of the solemnity of the day, but to show respect to the guests. Francis was displeased at this, and during dinner he went to the door of the convent, and took the hat and staff of a pilgrim who was soliciting alms, and then in this garb came to the refectory to beg as a poor pilgrim. The superior, who knew him by his voice, said to him, smiling : " Brother pilgrim, there are here very many religious, who stand in great need of what has been bestowed upon them out of charity ; however, come in, and they will give you what they can." Francis came in and sat himself on the ground, where he ate very contentedly some scraps of bread and other

things which they gave him on a platter, without choosing to have anything else.

After dinner he made them a beautiful discourse upon the poverty of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, in which he took occasion to say, that savoury dishes were ill-suited to the table of poor religious, particularly on Christmas day, when the Blessed Virgin had hardly a meal to eat, and when the Infant Jesus had no place in which He could be laid but a stable, where animals were sheltered. He concluded by telling them that the Feasts of our Lord and those of the saints, were better kept in the poverty which they had taken so much pains to practise, than by partaking of superfluities and dainties, which they had held in abhorrence.

Saint Bonaventura relates his having given a similar instruction on an Easter Sunday. Not having been able to beg out of doors, because he was in a very retired situation, he asked alms of his brethren, as being poor and a stranger, in memory of our Saviour, who appeared on the day of His resurrection, under the figure of a stranger, to the disciples who were going to Emmaus ; (152) and he afterwards said to them, that going through this world as strangers and pilgrims, as true Israelites, they were bound to celebrate the Passover in a spirit of poverty, which is His passage from this world to His Father. (153)

These instructions are particularly valuable to the religious, and especially for those who make profession of strict poverty ; but there is no

(152) Luke xxiv. 15, 16. (153) John xiii. 1.

faithful Christian who should not know, that in abstaining from servile work, he nevertheless profanes the holiness of festival days when he employs them in worldly diversions. St. Augustine says, (154) that those Christians who, in celebrating the solemn festivals of martyrs, take occasion to make them an excuse for debauchery and insult, in some degree, torture them, as their executioners did; and that those who trench upon temperance when the feast of Easter is celebrated, are carnal persons, who expose themselves to being excluded from celebrating it eternally with the angels. In order to sanctify the Lord's Day and other festivals, they should be employed in exercises of piety, in entering into the spirit of the mysteries which the Church celebrates, and in proposing to themselves the example of the saints whom we intend to honour.

Francis remained some time at Grecio, where one night when he intended to lay himself down to sleep, he felt a severe head-ache, and a shivering over his whole body, which quite impeded his resting. Thinking that this might be caused by a feather pillow which his friend Velita had compelled him to accept, in consequence of his infirmities, he called his companion, who was near his cell, and said: "Take away this pillow: I believe the devil is in it." His companion, who took it away, found it extremely heavy, and he had hardly left the cell than he found himself motionless and dumb. The Father, not doubting of the malignity of the devil, ordered the brother, under

(154) St. Aug. in Psal. lix. n. 15; in Psal. lxix. n. 2; et Serm. 252, n. 2.

obedience, to come back directly; the wicked spirit having immediately left him, he came back and related the state in which he had found himself. The saint, confirmed by this in the idea with which he had been impressed, that what he had suffered had been brought on by his enemy, he said: "It is true that yesterday, when reciting Compline, I perceived that the devil was approaching, and I prepared to resist him. He is full of malice and artfulness; as he could not sully a soul which God protects by His grace, he endeavoured to injure the body, and to prevent the necessary aid being afforded to it, in order to induce it to commit some fault, at least of impatience, and prevent his having recourse to prayer." The holy man was delivered from his sufferings, and got the rest he could not obtain when his head was laid upon a feather pillow. To what a height of perfection did not God propose to raise this His faithful servant? He did not even allow him to have a small relief from his sufferings. He is a holy God, jealous of the sanctity of souls, (155) who desires to have them purified by all sorts of sacrifices; but then, His rewards are great.

In this year, 1223, Francis had convened the usual Chapter at Whitsuntide, when brother Albert, of Pisa, who had returned from England, was made Provincial of Germany instead of brother Cæsar of Spire. Of Albert we shall have occasion to speak further on. Francis had also sent some of his brethren to establish a convent in an excellent situation near the town of Urbino,

(155) Deut. v. 9, 10.

which convent was built at the joint expense of the inhabitants of Montebarochio, and Montegiano.

The historians of the city of Bologna, (156) mention his having gone thither in the course of this year, when he preached in the great square, and that, knowing their great immorality, he exclaimed very often, in a loud voice: "City of Bologna, great calamities would, ere this, have befallen thee, and thou wouldst have been very miserable if thou hadst not had a powerful protector in my very dear brother, Dominic, who intercedes unceasingly for thee." He did not leave the city before she had put a stop to numerous irregularities; and it is believed that there occurred a circumstance at that time which is related by one of its historians. (157) While Francis was preaching in the great square, an earthquake was felt, which caused great alarm among the people, because there had been several others in the course of the year, which had thrown down many houses; but the saint, without manifesting any emotion, continued his discourse, showing to his auditors, that by these direful events, God warns men to quit their evil ways, and that the fruits of so doing would be their speedy conversion.

Whilst Francis was at Grecio and in its environs, Peter of Catania, his first Vicar-general, died in the convent of St. Mary of the Angels, on the 2nd day of March, 1224. (158)

(156) Sigon. et Leand. apud Wading ad ann. 1223, n. 25.

(157) Sigon. de Epist, Bonon. lib. ii.

(158) See the long note on Peter of Catania in the beginning of the year 1221, in p. 386 of the first volume of this Life.

As soon as he was in the tomb, God bore witness to his merit by many miracles. The people crowded to his grave, and left valuable offerings, which greatly disturbed the quiet of the religious, and caused them much uneasiness on account of their strict poverty. Francis having been informed of it went to the tomb, and, moved by holy zeal, he addressed the dead man in a commanding tone, which God alone could have inspired him with: "Brother Peter, whilst you were living, you always obeyed me punctually: I command you to obey me similarly now. Those who come to your grave are very troublesome to us. Our poverty is offended, and our quiet infringed on, so that our discipline becomes relaxed; thus, I command you, by your vow of obedience, to refrain from performing any more miracles." His order was obeyed. From that moment no more miracles were performed on the tomb of brother Peter.

An ancient manuscript chronicle which is preserved in the Vatican, mentions that Francis having directed the body of Brother Peter to be removed some time afterwards, it was found that it was turned and kneeling, the head bowed down, and in the posture of one who obeys a command given him. To mark the value of obedience and the respect due to it, God was pleased to permit a dead person to obey the orders of a superior as if he had been living.

A similar prohibition from performing miracles after death, is recorded in the Life of St. Bernard.(159) Gosvin, abbot of Cîteaux, who was at

(159) Vita St. Bern. lib. vii. cap. 28; tom 2. Apoc. edit. Mabill.

his funeral with many other abbots of his order, seeing the commotion caused by the numerous miracles which were worked there, and fearing this would become prejudicial to regular discipline, approached respectfully to the coffin, and forbad the saint from performing any more miracles; in virtue of his obedience. And, in fact, from that time there were no more performed at that shrine publicly, although God performed others privately by his invocation. The author adds, that St. Benedict(160) requires in his Rule, an obedience without reserve, according to the example of Jesus Christ, who was obedient unto death,(161) and that the soul of St. Bernard rendered itself obedient even after death to a mortal man.

Clare, and her daughters of the monastery of St. Damian, entreated Francis to give them a written rule, and a form of life similar to that of the Friars Minors, in order that, in his absence and after his death, they and those who should succeed them, might live up to it. These religious of St. Damian, did not wish to receive the Rule of St. Benedict, nor the constitutions prepared by Cardinal Ugolino, which the other monasteries, established on the plan of St. Damian, had willingly accepted, and which were of great severity: these nuns desired to have a rule which should be of greater rigour.

The holy patriarch consulted the same cardinal on this subject, he being the protector of both

(160) Reg. S^ti Bened. cap. vii. (161) Phil. ii. 8.

orders, and they jointly composed a Rule in twelve chapters, which was similar in all respects to that of the Friars Minors, with modifications and usages proper for females. If anything made Francis hesitate, the Cardinal gave his opinion either to modify certain parts, or to take precautions on others, and he inserted some articles from the constitutions which had before been drawn up. While he was writing, he could not help shedding tears, in reflecting that young females were willing to practise austerities so much above their strength.

We shall only give a summary of this Rule, in order to show the prudence of the founder. Ever attentive to the purity of the faith, he desires that Clare,(162) in the name of the sisterhood, as he had done in the name of all his brethren, shall promise obedience and respect to Pope Honorius, and to his successors, canonically elected, and to the Roman Church; that those who present themselves to be received, shall be carefully examined on the Catholic faith, and on the Sacraments of the Church; and that the sisters shall always have for their protector the cardinal who shall be appointed to that situation for the Friars Minors, by the Pope, in order that being always submissive to the holy Church, and prostrate at its feet, they may ever remain firm in the Catholic faith.

We might not think perhaps that this precaution was requisite for persons of the female sex

(162) Reg. St. Clar. cap. i. et xii.

whose lot in every state is submission and silence; but St. Francis knew that, being naturally curious, they do not let this propensity prevail less in matters of religion than in other things, and to take from them all opportunity of letting this injure their faith, he thought it prudent to bind them to the Roman Church, and to the Holy See, by a vow of entire obedience and inviolable attachment. In fact, it is the most efficacious method for restraining an indiscreet curiosity, and for preserving the faith pure and unspotted. Moreover, St. Jerome, who was extremely delicate on this point, wishing to prevent the illustrious Demetrias, who had consecrated herself to Jesus Christ by a vow of virginity, from adopting the errors of Origen, which the priest Rufinus, and Melania, the elder, had brought from the East, and which then began to spread, gave her this excellent advice in a letter written on the subject of her consecration: "Follow the faith of the holy Pope Innocent, the disciple and successor of Anastasius, and do not receive any strange doctrine, although perhaps you may flatter yourself to be sufficiently clever and sufficiently enlightened to detect its illusions."(163)

Besides, the holy patriarch was aware that the heretics in all ages took great care to seduce women into their views; whether they were devout or worldly, they were equally useful to them. Ecclesiastical History furnishes sufficient proofs of this, and our age is not deficient in examples. It is well known to whom these words

(163) St. Hier. Ep. ad Demet. 97, alias 8.

of St. Jerome to Jovinian and Pelagius are applicable: "You have Amazons in your camp. In order to obtain their good graces, you give them liberally knowledge of the law, and you assert in your writings that women ought to possess this knowledge, although the apostle teaches the contrary, that they ought to be silent and submissive." (164) St. Francis, therefore, acted very prudently, in binding, by the strongest and the most sacred ties to the Roman Church and to the Holy See, these religious females, as well as the brethren.

He desired that no female too aged, or infirm, or of weak intellect, should be received; and experience, as he said, that these defects are a great obstacle to the regularity of observance. (165)

All the monasteries did not follow his Rule as to young persons, whom he did not permit to be admitted as religious, till they had attained the proper age; directing that their heads should be shaved, that they should put off their secular dress, and be attired in the coarse stuff used by the community. If persons belonging to the world, and if some religious have their reasons why these regulations should not be complied with, it is nevertheless true, on the evidence of the religious themselves, that pensioners dressed as those who lived in the world, without any vocation for the cloister, and often with dispositions quite opposed to such vocation, particularly when

(164) St. Hier. adv. Jovin. lib. ii. sub fin. Id. Dial. adv. Pelag. lib. i. 1 Cor. xiv. 34 et 35.

(165) Reg. S. Clar. cap. ii.

they have attained a certain age, are always the cause of irregularity in a regular community. The bishops who are well aware of this, have often made wise and prudent regulations on the subject of these pensioners, but they have had great difficulty in compelling their observance. It is true there are institutions of females which are established for the instruction of girls, and in other orders they are sometimes, as it were, compelled to take pensioners; but in all these establishments it must be a subject requiring great watchfulness, and be one of great anxiety; and we cannot but congratulate the religious of St. Clare who adhere strictly to their Rule on this head, which is far more important than it may be thought.

In that part in which St. Francis speaks of the confession of the sisters, (166) he makes a very useful remark, which may be of service to all persons of the sex; that is, not to say a single word in the confessional but what relates to the confession, and which has not a direct relation to the salvation of the soul. If the religious would follow this advice literally, they would not be so long at their confessions, and would derive more fruit from it; besides which, they would find it more easy to be provided with confessors.

The instructions which he gives to the abbess, (167) are equally good for all superiors. "As soon as she is elected," says this holy man, "let her reflect on the burthen which she takes upon her, and of which she is to render an account to

(166) Reg. S. Clar. cap. iii. (167) Ib. cap. iv.

God. Let her conform herself to the community in all things, in her clothing, in her food, at church, in the dormitory, in the infirmary ; let her preside less by her rank, than by the holiness of her conduct, in order that her sisters, seeing her example, may obey her more from affection than from fear ; let her be on her guard against particular friendships, lest, being more attached to some, she may give scandal to others ; let her be a source of consolation to the afflicted, so that she may be their last refuge, lest, if she does not assuage their grief, their weakness may cause them to fall into despair." He recommends her to be of easy access to her sisters, to consider herself as their servant ; not to put herself in a passion at their faults, to correct them with humility and charity. Entering upon the care of temporal things, he desires the abbess to consult the sisters on the affairs of the house, because it often happens that God discovers to the least, what is most for their advantage. He forbids her to contract any considerable debt, unless with the consent of the community, and from evident necessity, and above all, not to receive any trust, which is always a subject of inconvenience and scandal.

It is on these important principles of the religious state that he directs all the sisterhood to work together,(168) and for the community, and to have nothing of their own ; to go seldom to the grille, and to keep entirely away from it in Advent and Lent ; never to go alone, and to converse when

(168) Reg. S. Clar. cap. vii. 5. 11. et seq.

there without seeing or being seen ; never to speak at the gate of the monastery; not to write, or to receive letters without leave of the abbess, and to be careful to keep enclosure carefully.

His attention extends even to the lay-sisters(169) who serve the community out of the enclosure. "Let them," he says, "be guarded in their conduct with persons of the world, speaking as little as possible, in order to edify them. When they are under the necessity of going out, let them stop only where it is requisite ; above all, let them be very circumspect in regard to men, that they may not give the smallest scope for evil suspicions or evil talk. Let them not be so rash as to bring back to the monastery anything they may have heard out of it ; and let them understand that they are strictly forbidden to communicate out of doors anything which may pass within the walls of the convent, and with which the world might not be edified." No more suitable instructions could be prepared for lay-sisters of all convents of nuns.

Finally, the holy founder points out(170) the qualifications which the visitors, confessors, and other religious ought to have, who are employed in giving spiritual or temporal aid to the sisters, "In order that all things," as St. Paul says, "may be done decently and according to order."(171)

For the rest, the strength of mind, discretion, and tender charity of St. Francis, is strikingly apparent in all he dictates, as to the impo-

(169) Reg. S. Clar. cap. ix. (170) Ib. cap. xii. (171) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

sition of penances, the dress of the sisters, and the care of the sick. (172)

St. Clare says in her will, addressing herself to the sisters: "Our blessed father, St. Francis, has written for us a form of life, principally that we may ever persevere in the practice of holy poverty, to which he has exhorted us, not only by his word and example, but by many writings which he has left us.(173) Pope Innocent IV., expressly declares in the Bull(174), which he issued at the earnest entreaty of St. Clare, three days before her death, that the Rule which he confirms was given them by St. Francis. All is his, except some very trifling things, in no way essential, which seem to have been added to it by Cardinal Ugolino, by St. Clare, and by the Pope. There are a number of monasteries in which it is observed in its full vigour, and it is called the first rule of St. Clare, because none of the modifications are found in it which were subsequently added to it by Cardinal Ugolino, when pope, by the name of Gregory IX., by Innocent IV., in 1246, and by Urban IV., in 1264.

The sanctity of Elizabeth, the daughter of Andrew the Second,(175) king of Hungary, the wife of Louis, Landgrave of Thuringia and Hesse—

(172) Reg. S. Clar. cap. viii. ix.

(173) Wading ad ann. 1253, n. 1, 5, et 6.

(174) Id. Annot. in Reg. St. Clar. argum.

(175) He is surnamed Jerusalimitanus, because he took the Cross for the Holy Wars. His wife, the mother of St. Elizabeth, was Queen Gertrude, daughter of Berthold, Duke of Carinthia.

(176) shone at this time with great splendour. Francis often testified to the Cardinal Protector, the great esteem in which he held her. What he principally admired in this princess was her humility, charity, mortification, and the love of poverty, in the midst of the grandeur of the world. One day whilst they were conversing, the Cardinal said that such virtue deserved that he should send her his cloak, that it was a present which was fitting, and that gratitude for all the favours which the princess had bestowed on his order, did not admit of his refusing it. Francis humbly declined doing this; but the Cardinal took the cloak from his back, and ordered him to send it to Elizabeth,(177) which he did. Elizabeth received it with great veneration, she kept it as a precious pledge of ecclesiastical poverty, which she tenderly loved, and which she embraced three years after-

(176) He was eminently endowed with all the qualifications of a great prince, and a perfect Christian. He took the Cross for the Holy War, and died on the voyage at Otranto, in Calabria, in the odour of sanctity, in 1227. The author of the History of the Crusades, says that he was equal in piety to his wife Elizabeth, and, on the testimony of the historian of the Landgraves of Thuringia, says, that it pleased God to give splendid proofs thereof, by miracles which were performed at his tomb.

(177) The Rev. Father Archangel, a religious penitent of the third Order of St. Francis, who wrote the life of St. Elizabeth, says: "That the Saint accompanied this present with an admirable letter, written with that spirit of zeal, holiness, and love, by which his soul was penetrated, and that in the course of the letter he congratulated St. Elizabeth on all the graces she had received from God, and which the Divine mercy had enabled her to turn to such profit." The writer quotes Wading, and the life of St. Elizabeth, which is in manuscript at Louvain. Nevertheless, Wading does not mention any letter, ad ann. 1226, n. 61, although he gives the very words of the Louvain manuscripts. We may reasonably believe that a letter was sent with the cloak, but it must be admitted that it is not forthcoming, for if Wading had seen it in manuscript, we cannot doubt but that he would either have copied the whole of it, or at least have given extracts from it.

wards, when she heard of the death of the Landgrave, her husband. Being herself on the point of death, she gave it, as a mark of friendship, to one of her females, who at that sad moment asked her for a mark of her affection, and she said to her, "I leave you my cloak: don't regard the poorness of the texture, but reflect seriously on the value of such poverty. I declare solemnly, that my dearly beloved Jesus Christ was favourable to my wishes, and loaded me with comfort every time(178) that, wearing this cloak, I sought to seek His adorable countenance."

It was in this year 1224, that the marvellous apparition, recorded by Wading, was seen, which is noticed as follows in the Legend of St. Bonaventura.

"Although Francis could not attend the provincial chapters, the order which he had laid down for these assemblies, the fervent prayers which he put up for their success, and the influence of the blessing which he gave them, were as if he were present at them. Sometimes even, God by His almighty power, caused him to appear among them in a sensible manner, as it happened at the chapter at Arles. While that excellent preacher Anthony, was discoursing to the brethren on the Passion of the Son of God, and on the inscription on His cross, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS," one of the religious, named Monald, a

(178) In the manuscript life of St. Elizabeth, which is at Louvain, we find, on the testimony of a celebrated preacher, whose name is Brother Berthold, that he had seen and had this cloak in his hands, in a house of the Hospitallers of the Teutonic Order, in a place in the diocese of Spire, which he calls Album Castrum.

man of exemplary virtue, moved by the Spirit of God to look towards the door of the chapter, saw the Blessed Francis raised into the air with his arms extended in a cross, give his blessing to the assembly. They then became filled with great spiritual consolation, which was an interior testimonial, assuring them of the presence of their father, and confirming what Monald had seen. This became more certain afterwards by the avowal which Francis made respecting it."

"We should have no difficulty in believing this," continues St. Bonaventura, "For God, by His almighty power, rendered the holy Bishop St. Ambrose,(179) during a mysterious sleep, present at the funeral obsequies of St. Martin; in a similar manner it was His pleasure that the truths announced by His preacher Anthony, on the subject of the cross of Jesus Christ, should receive greater weight by the presence of His servant Francis, who carried the cross with such exemplary courage, and preached it with such zeal."

Having given a Rule to the sisters of St. Damian, and transacted all that related to the three orders, he recommended strongly to his vicar, Brother Elias, to attend carefully, and to see that

(179) This marvellous event is recorded by St. Gregory of Tours, and the tradition has been uniform and unfailing in the Churches of Tours and Milan. Cardinal Frederic Boromeo, Archbishop of Milan, cousin and successor to St. Charles, maintained its correctness with pertinacity against some critics of his age. Cardinal Baronius, takes a different view, because he asserts that St. Martin did not die till after St. Ambrose; but the continuators of Bollandus prove clearly that St. Ambrose survived St. Martin by several months at least; all these proofs are collected with accuracy in a dissertation on the time of the death of St. Martin, which is at the end of his life, written by the Abbé Gervase, and printed at Tours in 1699. St. Gregor. Turon. De Mirac. S. Martin. lib. I. cap. v.

everything was carried into effect, and then thought it necessary to take some time to attend to his own interior. For it was his custom to go from one good work to another, in which he imitated, St. Bonaventura says, the angels(180) whom Jacob saw in his dream, going up and down the mysterious ladder, whose feet rested on the earth, but whose summit reached the heavens. This angelic man so employed the time which was given him, in which to amass treasures of merit, that he was constantly occupied either in descending to his neighbour by the laborious ministries of charity, or in elevating himself to God in the quiet exercise of contemplation. When circumstances had compelled him to give more time to the service of souls, he afterwards retired to some lonely and noiseless place, to remove from his own, by giving his thoughts solely to God, all the filth which might have attached itself to it, in his intercourse with men. Our Lord often gave His apostles examples of retreats, and they cannot be too often recommended to those who labour for the salvation of their neighbours.

Francis, therefore, went with some of his brethren to meditate in the convent of Celles, near Cortona. He met on the road a lady of good family, who was very pious, and in great affliction, having a husband who used her cruelly, and prevented her from serving God. She told him that she was come to pray to God for the conversion of her husband, and he made her this answer: "Go in

(180) Genes. xxviii. 12.

peace; and rest assured that your husband will soon afford you consolation; only tell him from God and from me, that now is the time of mercy, and that afterwards will be the time of justice." The lady received the Father's blessing, and said what she had been desired to her husband. The Holy Ghost descended at the same moment on this man, and he became so changed, that he said to his wife in a mild tone of voice, "Madam, let us serve God and work out our salvation." He passed thus many years with her in continence, with which she had inspired him, and they died most holily on the same day.

We saw in the two first Terciaries, a wife sanctified by her husband. This is precisely what St. Paul says,(181) "the one may contribute to the sanctification of the other." In fact, St. Chrysostom(182) thinks, that a virtuous woman who is mild and prudent, is more likely to bring back a profligate husband to the service of God, than any other person; and that the solid piety of a husband, with good manners and discreet firmness, may soften the asperity of an ill-tempered woman, or at least render her less fractious.

All that Francis did at Celles, was to give himself up to contemplation, and in order that the place itself should be favourable to meditation, he resolved, after having been there a short time, to retire to the desert of Mount Alverno; it was

(181) 1 Cor. vii. 14.

(182) St. Chrysos. Homil. 19, in cap. vii, 1 Cor

the Holy Ghost who inspired him with the desire to go thither, where he was to receive the glorious privilege of the Stigmata. As he passed through the country of Arezzo, his great infirmities compelled him to ask for an ass to continue his journey. There was not one in the village, but a person offered him a horse, which he was under the necessity of accepting: it was the only time that he had been on horseback since his conversion; for, whenever he had been forced to ride, he took the most despicable animal in order to set an example to his brethren. In the village to which the horse was sent back, there was a woman, who for several days was suffering cruelly from labour-pains, without being able to be delivered, so that no human hope remained of saving her life. The people of the place seeing the horse brought back which had carried the saint, took the bridle and placed it on the woman's bed, in full confidence that he who had had the use of it, would come to her aid; and, in fact, she was immediately, most fortunately, delivered. This fact is one of those related by St. Bonaventura.

On Mount Alverno Francis reaped extraordinary consolations in meditation; he was filled with ardent desires of heaven, and at the same time he felt that the celestial gifts were communicated to him in greater abundance. These interior feelings which threw his soul into ecstasies, raised his body into the air to greater or less height, in proportion to their degree, as if an extreme disgust for every thing that was connected with the earth, gave

him a stimulus to raise himself to his celestial home.

Brother Leo, his secretary and his confessor, attests to have seen him raised sometimes to the height of a man, so that they could touch his feet, sometimes above the tallest beech-trees, and sometimes so high that he was elevated out of sight. When he was not raised higher than the height of a man, Leo kissed his feet and watered them with his tears, with tender devotion, saying the following prayer: "My God, be merciful to me a sinner such as I am, by the merits of this holy man, and deign to communicate to me some small portion of Thy grace." When he lost sight of him, he prostrated himself, and prayed on the spot on which he had seen him elevate himself.

St. Thomas,(183) and many others believed that St. Paul in his rapture may have been elevated in body and soul into the third heaven, that is, into the Empirean, into Paradise, into the place where the angels and blessed are; and we must not call this in question, since the apostle himself says, that he does not know whether he was raised up in the body or out of the body. St. Theresa,(184) whose works are published by authority, says that she had sometimes raptures in which she was raised from the ground by a supernatural power, whatever resistance she might make; that others saw her in this state, and she saw herself in it. We may therefore believe that God raised the body of His servant Francis, while his soul was in

(183) 1a, 2æ Quæst. 175, art. 5, et 6; et in 2 Cor. 12, lect. 1, 2 Cor. xii. 2.

(184) Life of St. Teresa, ch. 20.

raptures by interior operations ; more particularly as the thing is attested by so trustworthy a witness as Leo, who certifies having seen it with his own eyes. "God," says St. Theresa, "grants extraordinary favours to a soul to detach it entirely from everything that is earthly, by the body itself, so that life becomes burthensome to it, and that it suffers a sort of torment brought on by a violent desire of possessing God, which is a martyrdom both agreeable, and at the same time painful; but we must be under the impression, that with ordinary grace, which God increases in proportion to faithfulness, we may attain to an entire disengagement from worldly affairs, and to that longing for heaven which, as Christians, we are obliged to feel.

One day when Francis was restored from one of the ecstasies which had raised him from the ground, Jesus Christ appeared seated at a low stone table, where the saint was in the habit of taking his meals, and speaking to him with the familiarity of a friend, as to the protection which He proposed to give to the order after his death, He made known to him the following points; first, that the order would last to the end of the world ; secondly, that those who should persecute the order, would not be long-lived, unless they became converted ; the third and fourth points, related to favours which our Saviour promised not only to the Friars Minors, but to those who were sincerely attached to them.

These favours are very great, but there is nothing incredible in them. As to the first,

although it be true that the Order of Friars Minors may be abolished by the Pope, as may every other Order, yet there is every reason to believe that it will exist continually in the Church, out of respect for the Gospel, on which it is wholly based; and it is not impossible that this may be God's will. As to the second, it would be by no means surprising, that the Divine Justice should punish, by a premature death, those who should be so irreligious, and have so much malignity, as obstinately to persecute an Order which was instituted to do good to all mankind, and to be of service to the entire Church. The prophet says, (185) that the Lord sometimes gives sensible marks of His protection to the just, by cutting off from sanguinary and disingenuous men the moiety of their days. As to the graces which Jesus Christ promises to the Friars Minors, and to the friends of their Order, we may easily understand that there are some peculiar to the religious who have the fortitude to embrace a line of life wholly evangelical and apostolical; and that God grants also special graces to those Christians, who, from a principle of religion, become friendly to this Institution; but it must be borne in mind, that these graces require, under all circumstances, a free and faithful co-operation, without which there is nothing to hope for as to the next world, in whatever state of life the party may be. It would be a gross and most deplorable illusion, to flatter oneself, that not living as we ought to live, we

(185) Ps. liv. 27.

might be saved merely because of being a religious of the Order of St. Francis, or, because we have a friendly feeling for the Order.

When our Lord had disappeared from the table, (186) Brother Leo, not knowing what had happened, was about to prepare it as usual for their meal, but Francis stopped him, saying: "It must be washed with water, with wine, with milk, with oil, and with balm, for Jesus Christ has condescended to sit on it, and to make known to me from thence what will be communicated to you hereafter." As Brother Leo had not the articles he required, he only took oil as Jacob had done, to consecrate this table to the Lord, and having poured it upon it, he pronounced these words: "This is the altar of God." (187) He then told his companion the four favours which had been promised, and added, that there was a fifth, which he should not repeat; it was thought that it was out of humility; for after his death, it was revealed to Brother Leo, that it consisted, in that God, in consequence of the merits of the saint, had deferred punishing the country by famine, to give sinners time to be converted, and as they did not avail themselves of it, after his death this scourge fell on the land, and was followed by a great mortality.

(186) This table was for near two hundred years in the sanctuary of the Church of Mount Alverno · but as pieces were constantly broken off to carry away from motives of devotion, for the last three hundred years, it has been placed in a chapel of the same church, where, surrounded by an iron grating, it is seen with the following inscription: Table of St. Francis, on which he had extraordinary apparitions, and which he consecrated by pouring oil on it, saying, "This is the altar of God."

(187) Genesis xxviii. 18, and xxxv. 14.

Towards the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, he retired into the most secret part of the mountains, where his companions built for him a small and unpretending cell. He remained there with Leo, having forbidden the others to return to him till the feast of St. Michael, and on no account to permit any persons whomsoever to have access to him. It was then the time of the fast, which he prescribed for himself, in honour of the Archangel; one of the nine periods of fasting he observed during the year, which will be noticed elsewhere. Proposing to fast this year more rigorously than in the preceding years, he directed Brother Leo to bring him nothing but bread and water once a day, and that towards evening, and place it at the threshold of his cell: "And when you come to me for matins," he added, "don't come into the cell, but only say in a loud voice, 'Domine labia mea aperies;' and if I answer, 'Et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam,' you will come in, otherwise you will go back." His pious companion, who had nothing more at heart than to obey him, and be useful to him, complied minutely with all he said; but he was often obliged to return in the night, because the holy man was in ecstasy, and did not hear him.

The reward of his solicitude was to be freed from a mental agitation, which he had found very troublesome; although it was not a temptation of the flesh, he nevertheless was ashamed of it, and did not dare make his Father acquainted with it; he only wished to have something writ-

ten by him, which he thought would enable him to overcome the temptation, or at least enable him to bear it with less difficulty. The Father, knowing by revelation the state of his mind, and his wish, desired him to bring him paper and ink, and he put on the top of the paper, in large characters, the letter "Tau," after which he wrote some praises of God, with this blessing: May the Lord bless you and take you into His keeping; may He show you His countenance, and take pity on you; may He turn His eyes towards you, and give you His peace. May God bless Brother Leo. (188) "Take this paper," he said, "and keep it carefully all your life." Leo had no sooner received it, than his temptation left him; he preserved it carefully till his death, knowing the virtue that was attached to it. This writing is still extant at Assisi, in the sanctuary of the church of St. Francis, and God has permitted it to be frequently used for the cure of diseases. St. Bonaventura says, that in his days it had been the means by which several miracles had been affected.

Francis experienced on Mount Alverno, what had occurred to St. Anthony (189) in the desert of Thebais: after having been the means of freeing others from the attacks of the devil, he was exposed to them himself. The subtle spirit often suggested evil thoughts to him. He placed horrid spectres before him, and he even visibly struck him severe blows. Once in a very narrow path,

(188) Num. vi. 24, 25, 26; Ps. lxvi 1.

(189) Vit. S. Anton. n. 48 et 51, tom. i. Oper. S. Athan.

and on the edge of a deep precipice, he appeared to him in a hideous figure, and threw himself upon him to cast him down ; as there was nothing by which he could support himself, Francis placed his two hands on the rock, (190) which was very hard and slippery, and they sank into it, as if it had been soft wax, and this preserved him from falling. An angel appeared to him to put away his fright, and to console him, causing him to hear celestial music, the sweetness of which in so far suspended the powers of his soul, that it seemed to him that it would have been separated from his body, had it lasted much longer.

He resumed his prayer, in which he returned thanks for having escaped the danger, and for the consolation he had received ; then he set about considering what might be the will of God. He was not, as St. Bonaventura remarks, like to those inquisitive minds, who rashly endeavour to scrutinize the ways of God, (191) and who are overwhelmed with His glory ; but as a faithful and prudent servant, he endeavoured to discover the intention of His Master, only from the anxiety he felt to conform himself to it in all things. A divine impression induced him to think that if he opened the Book of the Gospel, he would learn from Jesus Christ what in him and for him would be most agreeable to God. Having, therefore, again prayed with great fervour, he told Brother

(190) Wading quotes a writer who died in the fifteenth century, who says that the impressions of the Saint s hands were still seen on the rock. Ad ann. 1224, n. 8.

(191) Prov. xxv. 27.

Leo to take the New Testament from the altar, and open it; Leo opened it three times in honour of the most Holy Trinity, and each time he opened it at the Passion of our Blessed Lord. Francis, who was filled with the Spirit of God, understood from that, that as he had imitated Jesus Christ in the actions of His life, he must now conform himself to His sufferings, and in the pains of His Passion.

Although his body was greatly weakened by the austerities he practised, by which he incessantly carried the cross of the Son of God, he was not alarmed at the idea of having new sufferings to endure; on the contrary, he put on fresh courage for martyrdom, in which he thought consisted that conformity to the Passion of Jesus Christ, according to the wish he had three times entertained of exposing himself to it. For the love he had for the good Jesus, remarks St. Bonaventura, was so lively that the following words of the Canticles, seemed to be applied to him: "his lamps are lamps of fire and flame." (192) The charity which inflamed his heart was so ardent and forcible, that all the waters of tribulation, and all the fury of persecution would have been unable to extinguish it. It is in this sense that St. Paul said: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" (193) Such is the exalted love (194)

(192) Cant. viii. 6, 7. (193) Rom. viii. 35.

(194) See Bourdaloue's beautiful Sermon on the Love of God; it is one of the most useful instructions that can be given to Christians.

which Christians should have for God, if they desire to love Him eternally ; their hearts must be ready and willing to make every sacrifice, and to suffer everything in order to preserve this divine love.

Some days after the opening of the Book of the Gospel, Leo had come at midnight to say aloud, at the door of Francis' cell, "Domine labia mea aperies," according to the order he had received, and receiving no reply, he had the curiosity to advance a step farther, and to look through the chinks of the door, to see what was going on. He saw the cell entirely illuminated, and a bright ray of light come from heaven, and rest upon the head of the saint; he heard voices which made questions and answers ; and he remarked that Francis, who was prostrate, often repeated these words: "Who art Thou, O my God, and my dear Lord? and who am I ? a worm, and Thy unworthy servant." He also saw him put his hand three times into his bosom, and each time stretch it out to the flame.

The light disappeared, the conversation ceased, and Leo wished to retire quickly ; but the Father heard him, and rebuked him severely for having watched him, and thus seen what ought to have been secret. Leo asked pardon, and having obtained it, he humbly entreated his master to explain to him for the greater glory of God, the things he had seen, which Francis did in these terms :—

"God manifested Himself to me in the flame which you saw ; He explained many mysteries to

me, by His infinite goodness, and He communicated to me an immense knowledge of Himself, and I was so overpowered with admiration, that I exclaimed: 'Who art Thou, Lord, and who am I?' For nothing has tended more to my knowledge of what I am, than the contemplation of the infinite and incomprehensible abyss of the perfections of God, although from afar, and under obscure veils.

"The Lord then having condescended to discover to me, as much as I am capable of knowing of His infinite greatness, I could not avoid making this reflection; that it is certain that every creature is a mere nonentity before God. While I was thus meditating, it was His pleasure to direct, that for all the good He had done me I should make Him some offering; I replied, that my poverty was so great, that except the poor habit which I wore, I had nothing in the world but my body and my soul, which I had long since dedicated to Him. The Lord then urged me to offer Him what was in my bosom, and I was surprised to find there a beautiful piece of gold, which I immediately offered to Him; I found three pieces successively, which I presented to Him in the same manner; it was when you saw me extend my hand in the flame. I gave thanks to God for His many benefits, and for the means He put in my power to make Him some acknowledgment. He gave me to understand that the three pieces of gold, which were highly agreeable to Him, represented the three modes of life which it had been His will that I should institute, and also the

three vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, when they are kept as they ought to be by religious persons." After this recital he sent Leo away, and forbade his prying in future into what he should be doing in private.

When he said that nothing had tended so much to the knowledge of what he was as the contemplation of the infinite perfections of God, he well knew that the best mode to attain to the knowledge of God is to know oneself, as St. Augustine and St. Bernard (195) teach us; that is to say, that in order to our obtaining peculiar lights, which open to us the grandeur of God, it is necessary to be thoroughly impressed with our own vileness, be sensible of our misery, and annihilate ourselves, because the Divine Majesty only communicates itself to the humble. But St. Francis proposed to himself to explain that when it pleases God to manifest Himself in some manner to a soul which is duly sensible of its own nothingness, it is better impressed with its own nothingness by the disproportion it sees between the Sovereign Being and His creature, which discovers to it a thousand imperfections which it was not previously aware of, as a ray of the sun, penetrating into a room, discovers a multitude of atoms of which we were previously unaware. We may also form to ourselves an idea of it by our knowledge of human ignorance; a half-learned man is less sensible of his ignorance, and sometimes he is not at all aware of it, he thinks he knows everything;

(195) S. Aug. Tract. xviii. in Joan. n. 10. S. Bernard de Div. Term. ii. n. 1, in Cant. serm. xxxvi. n. 6.

but a very learned man knows that he is ignorant of an infinity of things, and finds his mind very confined. So also souls which are interiorly enlightened as to the greatness of the Divinity, are more perfectly aware of their own nothingness, and are more humble than those who have not similar views. The mode adopted by the former is to dive into its own nothingness by the light of faith, to humble itself continually, in order to attain to a more exalted idea of the greatness of God, and to repeat frequently this prayer of St. Augustine: "O God, who art always the same! may I know myself, may I know Thee." (196)

The self-knowledge which St. Francis possessed in such perfection, prepared him sufficiently for the signal favour which God proposed to confer upon him, according to the principle of St. Augustine; (197) that deep foundations are requisite for a building of great height.

About the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross, which is on the fourteenth of September, (it is believed that it was on the eve,) an angel appeared to him and gave him notice, as he afterwards communicated to some of his companions, to prepare himself for all that God would do for him: "I am prepared for everything," he replied, "and I shall not in any way oppose His holy will, provided He condescends to assist me with His grace. Although I am a useless man, and unworthy that God should cast a thought on me, nevertheless, as

(196) S. Aug. Soliloq. lib. ii. n. 1, tom. i. Oper.

(197) Id. serm. lxix. n. 2. Edit. Bened.

I am His servant, I beg He may act by me according to His good pleasure."

This generous concurrence, which had martyrdom in its view, was the last disposition which the Almighty required previous to giving to Francis the peculiar and signal prerogative of the Stigmata, that is to say, previous to imprinting on his body the five wounds of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We are about to put on record this marvellous event as nearly as possible in the very words of St. Bonaventura, (198) which we have extracted from his two legends. He does not name the precise day, but Wading assigns good reasons for thinking it occurred on the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross.

"Francis, the servant and truly faithful minister of Jesus Christ, being one morning in prayer on one side of the mountain of Alverno, elevating himself to God by the seraphic fervour of his desires, and by the motives of tender and affectionate compassion, transforming himself into Him who, by the excess of His charity, chose to be crucified for us; he saw, as it were, a seraph, having six brilliant wings, and all on fire, descending towards him from the height of heaven. This seraph came with a most rapid flight to a spot in the air, near to where the saint was, and then was seen between his wings the figure of a crucified

(198) They call his second Legend, the abridgment which he made of the first, in order that it might be read in the Divine Office. All that is said of the Stigmates in either of them, is narrated with great exactness. Those who have only read the small Legend of the Office, must not be surprised to find some trifling circumstances in it which are not in the more extended one.

Man, who had his hands and feet extended and fastened to a cross. His wings were so arranged that he had two of them on his head, two were stretched out to fly with, and he covered his whole body with the two others.

"At the sight of such an object Francis was extraordinarily surprised; joy, mingled with grief and sorrow, spread over his soul; the presence of Jesus Christ, who manifested Himself to him under the figure of a seraph in so marvellous a manner, and with such familiarity, and by Whom he found himself considered so favourably, caused in him an excess of pleasure; but the sorrowful spectacle of His crucifixion filled him with compassion, and his soul felt as if it was pierced through with a sword. Above all, he admired with deep concern that the infirmity of His sufferings should appear under the figure of a seraph, well knowing that this does not agree with His state of immortality; and he could not comprehend the intention of the vision, when our Lord, who appeared outwardly, communicated to him interiorly, as to His friend, that He had been placed before him in order to let him know that it was not by the martyrdom of the flesh, but by the inflammation of the soul, that he was to be wholly transformed into a perfect resemblance to Jesus Christ crucified.

"The vision vanished, after having had a secret and familiar conference with him, leaving his soul filled with seraphic ardour, and imprinting on his body a figure similar to that of the crucifix, as if his flesh like softened wax had received the im-

pression of the letters of a seal. For the marks of the nails immediately began to show themselves on his hands and feet, such as he had seen them on the figure of the crucified man. His feet and hands were seen to be perforated by nails in their middle ; the heads of the nails, round and black, were on the inside of the hands, and on the upper parts of the feet ; the points, which were rather long, and which came out on the opposite sides, were turned and raised above the flesh, from which they came out. There was, likewise, on his right side (199) a red wound, as if it had been pierced with a lance, and from this wound there often oozed a sacred blood, which soaked his tunic, and anything he wore round his middle."

This is the new prodigy which Jesus Christ chose to exhibit in favour of Francis, in order to render him more like to Himself. He marked him and ornamented him with His own wounds, by a singular and glorious prerogative which had never previously been conceded to any one, and which justly excites the admiration of the Christian world. St. Bonaventura is of opinion that all human encomium falls short of what it deserves. In fact, in the midst of all the marvels which we find in the life of St. Francis, we are compelled to admit that this is the one which, without any

(199) Saint Bonaventura says in the 13th chapter of his Legend "Dextrum quoque latus quasi lanceâ transfixum rubrâ cicatrice abductum erat;" and in the 14th chapter he says : "Vulnus lateris....plaga lateris;" which makes it clear that by the word "cicatrice" he meant a wound, and an open wound. Could he have had any other meaning, he who adds that blood *often* issued from it?

exaggeration, may be termed incomparable. What can there be so beautiful as to be visibly clothed with Jesus Christ, to bear on his body the lively resemblance of those wounds which are the price of our redemption, the source of life, and the pledge of salvation? What interior conformity must the servant have had with his Master to have deserved to have so marked a one exteriorly, for no doubt the one was in proportion to the other. This faithful servant having embraced the cross from the very commencement of his conversion, he carried it in his heart, in his mind, in his body, and in all his senses; all his love or his desires were centered in the cross, it was the standard of his militia. Therefore did Jesus Christ, whose goodness appears with magnificence towards those who love Him, after having honoured the zeal of Francis by various apparitions in His crucified state, chose, as a crowning of all His favours, that he should be himself crucified, in order that, as the love of the cross constituted his merit before God, the glory of being so miraculously fastened to it, should render him admirable in the sight of mankind.

Such was the sort of torment which God reserved for him in order to satisfy the extreme desire he had to suffer martyrdom, on which St. Bonaventura exclaims: "O truly fortunate man, whose flesh not having been tortured by the racks of a tyrant, has, nevertheless, borne the impress of the Lamb which was slain! O fortunate soul, who hast not lost the palm of martyrdom, although it was not separated from the body by the sword

of the persecutor!" Must we not also admit that the impression of the five wounds of our Saviour Jesus Christ on his body was a true martyrdom? a precious martyrdom; rigorous in one sense, and the more so as it was not the consequence of the cruelty of executioners, but was owing to darts of divine love, and to the very influence of the Son of God, the operation of which is most powerful; sweet and delicious in another sense, and the more so as it was the effect of a most affectionate communication, and brought about more intimate relations. Our Saviour thus, in some degree, represented in His creature the situation in which He had been on the cross, enjoying sovereign beatitude, while He suffered all the pains and violence of the execution.

It was in all probability after this favour of the Stigmata, that Francis composed the two Italian canticles which are found amongst his works. In the first, (200) the burden of which is, "In foco l'amor mi mise, in foco l'amor mi mise," he describes very practically, with figurative and very lively expressions, the struggle he had with divine love, and the attacks he had himself made on that love, the wounds which he received, the flames by which his heart was kindled, and the state of languor and faintness to which he found himself reduced, and finally, the strength which Jesus

(200) It was translated into Latin by H. Chifellius of Antwerp, he who has written the war of Grenada in heroic verse; the translation is amongst the works of St. Francis, which were published by Wading in 1623.

Christ had imparted to him, with a tranquillity of feeling exceedingly refreshing. In the second, (201) which is much longer than the first, he describes with strength, elevation, and tenderness, the vehemence of the divine love in his heart; he enters into conversation with Jesus Christ, who answers him; and this love constantly increasing, he declares that he can resist no longer, that he consents to everything, and that he wishes no other relief than to die of love.

St. Teresa, speaking of her situation at prayer, in which she often found herself as it were intoxicated with the love of God, and quite beside herself, said: (202) "I know a person who, without being a poet, sometimes made very good extempore verses in spiritual canticles, (203) which expressed beautifully her sufferings; it was not from her mind that they originated; but, in order

(201) Father James Lampugnano, an Italian, of the Society of Jesus, translated this into several sorts of Latin verse, and it is thought that it could not be better done. It is found with that of the first canticle.

(202) It is in the sixteenth chapter of her Life, written by herself, translated by the Abbé Chanut, one of the three Visitors-General of the French Carmelites, printed in 1691, which is in every respect much superior to that of M. Arnauld d'Andilly of 1670.

(203) They are the sort of Spanish verses called Gloses, in which one verse is repeated at the end of each strophe. The repetition in the glose of S. Teresa is, "Que muero porque non muero:" "I die of grief for not dying." They were printed at Antwerp in the year 1649, in Spanish, with her other works. M. de la Mannoye, of the French Academy, has made an excellent translation of them in French; it would be very desirable that the two Canticles composed by St. Francis were also translated by as clever a poet. See the Memoirs of Trevaux, 17, v. 2. Sept. art. 8.

to the glory so delicious a suffering caused her, she laid her complaint in this manner before God. She would have wished to tear herself to pieces to show the pleasure she experienced in this delightful pain." These spiritual and divine emotions are neither known nor relished by profane minds and hearts, who only learn from their own corruption, and from the pestiferous books which encourage it, the extravagances and transports of criminal love; but pure minds, who know what it is to love God, and to be loved by Him, are not astonished at the effects which this holy reciprocated love produced in a St. Francis, in a St. Theresa, and in many others. Neither is it surprising that the saints who are full of the thoughts of God, should have had recourse to poetry to express the feelings of their hearts, since the sacred writers, inspired by the spirit of God, have composed many of the sacred books in poetry, (204) and that the doctors (205) of the Church have addressed to the Almighty in verse prayers full of the tenderest sentiments of piety; it is

(204) See Dom. Calmet's Dissertation on the Poetry of the Ancient Hebrews, at the beginning of his Commentary on Exodus, and on the Psalms, tome ii.

(205) St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Ambrose, St. Paulin, and others. Calmet complains, with reason, that wits who are good poets attach themselves to trifles, or to subjects which excite or flatter the passions. He says, that the advantages they have received from God in their poetic talents, ought to be employed in rendering the truths and maxims of religion agreeable. However, he admits that Christian poetry up to this time had not been successful, which he attributes to the corruption of the age, and to the licentiousness of the upper classes. And indeed this is the principal cause; but it has this further effect, that the truths of the orthodox faith, and the maxims of Christian morality, are not relished either in verse or prose. Dissert. sur la Poesie des Hebreux.

also what is practised by the universal Church in her divine office.

The precious wounds which Francis had received, were a subject of great embarrassment to him; for, in the first place, he wished to conceal them wholly, well knowing, that it is "proper to conceal the secrets of the king," as the angel said to Tobit, (206) and in the second place, he saw that the wounds were too conspicuous to remain long hidden from those of his companions who had familiar intercourse with him. His hesitation was, whether he should tell them what had occurred, in confidence, or whether he should be silent on the subject, for fear of making known the secrets of the Lord. He called some of them to him and laid before them his difficulty in general terms, and solicited their advice. Brother Illuminatus, he from whom he had received such excellent advice in the camp before Damietta, opining, from the look of astonishment which he remarked in him, that he had seen something wonderful, said: "Brother, you ought to know that it is not only for your own edification, but for that of others also, that God sometimes discovers his secrets to you, for which reason you should be fearful of being reprimanded for having hidden the talent, unless you make known what is to be of service to many." (207)

Francis was struck with this advice, and although on other occasions he was in the habit of saying with Isaiah: "My secret is to myself,"

(206) Tob. ii. 7. (207) Math. xxvi. 26.

(208) he communicated to them all that had passed in the apparition, but always with great fear; adding, that He who had appeared to him, had communicated things to him which while he lived he never would disclose to any one. We must believe, as St. Bonaventura remarks, that the Seraph whom he saw attached to the Cross in so wonderful a manner, or rather, Jesus Christ Himself, in the appearance of a seraph, had said to him, as He had to St. Paul: "Secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter," (209) either because there are no words in which they can be expressed, or as a respected author (210) thinks, because there are no souls sufficiently disengaged from sensible objects, and sufficiently pure, to understand them.

The confidence which Francis had reposed in his companions, did not prevent his taking every precaution possible to hide, as much as it was in his power, the sacred marks with which the King of Kings had secretly favoured him. From that time forward, he kept his hands covered, so that the nails should not be seen, and he wore slippers, which covered those of his feet. Wading, (211) saw in the monastery of the Poor Clares of Assisi, the sort of slipper which St. Clare made for her spiritual Father, so neatly contrived that the upper part covered the heads of the nails, and the underneath being somewhat raised, the points did

(208) Is. xxiv. 26. (209) 2 Cor. xii. 4.

(210) Reflexions morales sur le Nouveau Testament. A Paris, chez Montalan, 1714 et 1716.

(211) Wading, ad ann. 1224, n. 23.

not prevent his walking; for these miraculous nails did not take from him the use of his hands and feet, although it was painful to him to use them.

But all the precautions which his humility had suggested became useless; as it is God's province to reveal for His greater glory, the wonderful things which He does. The Lord Himself, who had secretly marked on Francis the impressions of His Passion, by their means worked miracles, which manifestly disclosed their hidden and marvellous virtue. Moreover, the saintly man could not prevent his wounds from being seen and touched by persons whose veracity cannot be called in question, and who rendered public testimony thereto; besides which, after his death, all the inhabitants of Assisi saw, touched, and kissed them. The Sovereign Pontiffs of those days were so convinced of this admirable event, that they issued Bulls to exalt it by their praise, and to repress by their authority those who refused credence to the fact, because they had not seen it with their own eyes. Pope Alexander IV. certified it, as having been an eye-witness to it, in a sermon and in a Bull; and St. Bonaventura says, that the proofs then collected made it so certain, that they were sufficient to dispel every shade of doubt. This degree of certainty is still further enhanced and rendered more respectable, since Popes Benedict XI., Sixtus IV., and Sixtus V. have consecrated and canonized the impression of the Stigmata on the body of St. Francis, by having instituted a particular festival in their

honour, which is found in the Roman Martyrology,(212) on the 17th of September, and which is kept in the universal Church.

There is so much to be said on this interesting subject, that we have thought it useful to give a particular history of it at the end of this work, in which we shall invincibly demonstrate the truth of the Stigmata of St. Francis, against the impiety of heretics and libertines, against hard believers, against the malignity of certain critics, who are even in some sense worse than all the former; in which we shall show that these holy wounds are calculated to enkindle the love of Jesus Christ crucified in the hearts of the faithful.

The forty days which Francis had resolved to pass in solitude and fasting having terminated on Michaelmas day, this new man, whom perfect love had transformed by a lively resemblance into Him whom he loved, descended from the mountain, carrying with him the image of Jesus Christ crucified, not modelled by the hand of a workman on wood or stone, but stamped on his very flesh by the finger of the living God Himself, as St. Bonaventura expresses it. He became more partial than ever to Mount Alverno, where he had received this sacred image, and recommended to his brethren to cherish great respect for this holy place.

As he descended the mountain, he met a number of the country people, who had already heard of the marvellous occurrence; it is probable that God had informed the people of it by some extra-

(212) Baron. not. in Martyrol. Rom. 17 Sept.

ordinary manifestation. At the time when it occurred, they saw at break of day the mountain illuminated by a most brilliant light, and what they heard informed them of the reason. They wished to kiss his hands; but they were tied round with bandages, and he only offered them the tips of his fingers.

In a village near Arezzo they brought him a child of about eight years of age, who had been dropsical for four years, whom he cured instantaneously by touching him. He went afterwards to Montaigne, where Count Albert, the Lord of that place, who was his good friend, and at whose house he often took his bed, received him with great pleasure. But the Count was distressed to hear him say that his infirmities would not allow him to return there any more, and that the time of his death was hastening on. To mitigate the grief of such melancholy tidings, he entreated the saint to leave him some memorial of their friendship; to which Francis replied, that he had nothing to give but the miserable habit he had on, but that he would willingly leave it him provided he could get another.

The change was soon effected; and it is not to be told how much Albert prized the habit in which Francis had received the impression of the precious pledges of our Redemption. After the death of St. Francis he enfolded this poor habit in rich stuffs of silk and gold, and he placed it with great veneration on the altar of the church. The Lords of Montaigne, from father to son, had it long in their possession; and it at length came, in the

manner related by Wading, into the possession of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany, who preserve it as a precious relic, which is only shown after respectful ceremonies.

The great infirmities which the man of God suffered, obliged him to take an ass to carry him from Montaigne to Mount Casal, through the borough of Saint Sepulchre. When he reached the latter place, which is very populous, the crowd surrounded him, touched him, and pressed upon him, but he was insensible of it; he was as a dead person, not aware what was doing to him, insomuch, that having proceeded a good way from thence, and coming to himself, as one returned from the other world, he enquired of some lepers (213) at the door of the hospital, whether they should soon get to Saint Sepulchre: his mind, contemplating, says St. Bonaventura, with deep attention the brilliant lights of heaven, had not noticed the difference of time, place, or persons, so penetrated was he with divine communications, that he was not aware of what passed around him.

On reaching Mount Casal, he learnt that one of his religious was suffering under an extraordinary disorder, which some considered to be epilepsy, and others thought it a true case of possession by the devil, for he had all the violent contortions of those possessed. The Father, who was full of tender compassion for the suffering, was greatly afflicted at seeing one of his children in this deplorable state, and he sent him a mouthful of the bread he was eating, the virtue of which

(213) These hospitals are called in French "Maladeries," or "Leproseries."

was so great, that as soon as the sick man had swallowed it he was cured, and thenceforward had no relapse of the disorder.

From Mount Casal Francis went to Castello, and at the house where he went to lodge, he was required to lend his aid to a female whom the devil possessed, and compelled to talk without ceasing. The servant of God with great prudence first sent one of his companions to see and hear her, to examine into the case, to see whether it was really one of possession, or whether the woman was not counterfeiting. She gnashed her teeth ; she imitated the cry of an elephant with a dreadful countenance ; she affected to laugh when she saw the religious, and ordered him to go away, saying that she did not care about him, but she was afraid of him who hid himself. The saint, who was in prayer, having heard this, came into the room, where this woman was speaking, without any reserve, before many who were there. As soon as she saw him she fell on the ground, trembling. He reproached the demon with his cruelty in thus torturing one of God's creatures, and ordered him to leave her, which he did instantly, but with so much noise as manifested his wrath. In the same town he cured a child who had an ulcer, by making the sign of the cross on the dressing which covered it. When the parents of the child took off the dressing, they saw with surprise in lieu of the ulcer, a fleshy excrescence, like a red rose, which remained during the whole of the child's life, as a sensible

proof and memorial of the miracle which had been performed on her.

After an abode of a month at Castello, the man of God set out on his return to Saint Mary of the Angels; brother Leo, who accompanied him, assures us, that during the whole way, and until his arrival in the convent, he saw a beautiful golden cross, shining with various colours, preceding him, which stopped where he stopped, and advanced as he went on. This pious companion understood from this, that God had chosen to give to His servant the consolation of seeing with the eyes of his body that cross which he had always in his heart, and which he likewise bore in his flesh by the wounds of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more affecting than what St. Bonaventura says of the feelings of St. Francis after having received the impression of these sacred wounds. These are the words of the holy doctor:

"Francis, being crucified with Jesus Christ in mind and body, not only burnt with the ardent love of a seraph, but he likewise participated in the thirst(214) for the salvation of souls which

(214) The thirst of Jesus Christ on the cross was a true and natural thirst, caused, as St. Cyril observes, by extreme exhaustion; and He expressed it to show that He was really man, and that He suffered real pains. It was also to expose Himself to an additional suffering for the plenitude of our redemption, according to what had been foretold by David: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." But St. Bonaventura sees likewise in it a mystical sense, the burning thirst which Jesus Christ had for the salvation of men, according to the saying of St. Gregory Nazianzen, that the thirst of God is that we should thirst for Him, "Deus sitiens sitiri;" and St. Augustine, that Jesus Christ, asking the Samaritan woman for water to drink, thirsted for the faith which it was His wish she should have. "Ille autem qui quærebat bibere, fidem ipsius mulieris sitiebat." Ps. lxviii. 26. St. Cyril Alex. lib. xii. in Joan.

the Son of God felt on the Cross.(215) As he could not go, as he usually had done, into the towns and villages, on account of the large nails he had on his feet, he had himself carried thither, to animate every one, although he was in a deplorable state of languor and half dead with his infirmities, to carry the cross of our Saviour. He used to say to his brethren : 'Let us now begin to serve the Lord our God, for up to this time we have made but little progress.'

"He was also ardently desirous of returning to his first practices of humility,—to attend the lepers, and to bring his body into subjection, as he had done in the first days of his conversion. Although his limbs were enfeebled by his exertions and sufferings, that did not prevent his hoping, that as his mind was yet vigorous and active, he should still combat and be victorious over his enemy. Under the guidance of Jesus Christ, he proposed to perform some extraordinary things ; for when love is the spur, which admits of no neglect nor slackness, it urges to the undertaking of things of greater importance. His body was in such unison with his mind, so submissive, so wholly obedient, that far from resisting, it was forward in some measure, and went as it were of itself towards the attainment of the great elevation of sanctity to which he aspired."

It being God's will that he should acquire the summit of merit, which is only attained by great

cap. xix., v. 28 et 29. St. Gregory Nazian. Tetrast. n. 87. St. Augustine, Tract. 15 in Joan.

(215) John xix. 28.

patience, tried him by many sorts of maladies, so grievous, that there was scarcely any part of his body in which he did not suffer excruciating pains. These reduced him to such a state, that he was scarcely more than skin and bone, almost all his flesh was wasted away; but these sufferings he did not consider as such, he denominated them his sisters, to show how much he cherished them.

These words of Saint Francis to his brethren: "Let us begin to serve the Lord our God, for until now we have made little progress;" contain one of the most important lessons of the spiritual life. The wise man says of the knowledge of the works of God: "When a man hath done, then he shall begin."(216) St. Augustin(217) applies this sentence to the obscurity of the sacred writings, when he says, that the deeper they are searched, the more hidden mysteries are found in them; and it is equally applicable to Christian and religious perfection. It is an error condemned by the Church(218) to believe that a man is capable of attaining in this life such a degree of perfection, as not to be able to increase it; but it would be a deplorable illusion to make use of the language condemned by Saint Bernard:(219) "I have done enough, I will remain as I am, neither become worse, nor better." The just man never says, "it is enough;" he has always hunger and thirst after justice; as the Apostles "he forgets the things that are behind, and stretches himself to those

(216) Eccl. xviii. 6. (217) St. Aug. Epis. ad Valus, 137.
(218) Clem. cap. Ad nost. De Hæres.
(219) St. Bernard, Epist. 244

that are before to press towards the mark."(220) To believe that we have made progress is not to do so; not to strive to advance is to go back, and to lose oneself. What instruction is here for the most perfect, in the example of a Saint, who deems himself to have made little progress in the service of God, and who wishes to begin all afresh at a time when he is found deserving to bear on his body the wounds of Jesus Christ!

His disorders were only afflicting to Francis in as much as related to the vast projects he unceasingly formed for the good of souls. He was most grieved at the state of his eyes, which made his sight begin to fail. Notwithstanding his other infirmities, whenever he could, he mounted on an ass, and went about preaching penance, announcing the kingdom of God, and addressing these words to all his hearers: "Jesus Christ, my love, was crucified." He spoke with so much fervour, and with such assiduity, visiting sometimes five or six towns(221) in the course of a single day, that it might be said that God gave him as to the Prophet, the agility of a deer.(222) However, although in the person of St. Francis the interior man was renewed from day to day, yet it necessarily fell out that the exterior man, borne down by so much austerity and fatigue, began rapidly to decay. The acute pains in his eyes, and the tears he constantly shed, brought on blindness, and it

(220) Phil. iii 13 et 14.

(221) They are very near to each other in the vale of Spoleto, whither he usually went.

(222) Ps. xvii. 36; 2 Cor. iv. 16.

became impossible for him to preach any longer, however desirous he was so to do. Moreover, he would not have recourse to remedies, although his brethren urged him to avail himself of them, because, being already in heaven in mind and heart, he wished, as the Apostle had done, "to have his conversation in heaven."(223)

Brother Elias, the Vicar General, who felt the loss which the death of its holy Founder would be to the Order, was most anxious to procure him relief. His feelings also induced him to wish it; for, with all his faults, he was tenderly attached to his Father, and was as a mother to him by the care he took of him; of this all the first writers of the life of Saint Francis bear testimony. He used entreaties and argument to induce him to have recourse to medicine for his disorders, and quoted the following scriptural texts: "The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them."(224) He also on this occasion made use of the power he had received from the Saint, he commanded him, on his obedience, not to resist his cure. Cardinal Ugolino, protector of the Order, urged him also to the same effect, and warned him to be careful, lest there should be sin instead of merit in neglecting to take proper care of himself.

The sick man yielded to the advice of his friends. He was removed to a small and poor cell, very near the convent of Saint Damian, that he might be nearer to Clare and her sisterhood, who loved him as their father, and who prepared

(223) Phil. iii. 20, et i. 23. (224) Eccl. xxxviii. 4.

the medicines for him. He remained there forty days with the brothers Massé, Ruffin, Leo, and Angelo of Rieti; but the disorder of his eyes became so painful, that he could get no rest night or day; when he endeavoured to procure a little sleep, he was prevented by a number of rats, which infested the hut, and ran over his table and bed so daringly, that it was thought to be a stratagem of the evil one.

Seeing himself overwhelmed by an accumulation of disorders, he made the following prayer humbly to God: "My Lord and God, cast Thine eyes upon me, and lend me Thine aid; grant me grace to bear with patience all these ills and infirmities." A voice forthwith made him this answer: "Francis, what price should be set upon that which shall obtain a kingdom which is above all price? Know that the pains you suffer are of greater value than all the riches of the world, and that you ought not to be rid of them for all that is in the world, even when all the mountains should be changed into pure gold, all its stones into jewels, and all the waters of the sea into balsam."(225) "Yes, Lord," exclaimed Francis, "it is thus that I prize the sufferings Thou sendest me; for I know that it is Thy will that they should be in this world, the chastisements of my sins, in order to show me mercy in eternity." "Rejoice, then," added the voice, "it is through the way in which you are, that heaven is reached." At these words he

(225) Balsam is a very precious plant. Josephus says that the Queen of Saba presented some plants to Solomon, and that from that time balsam became common in Judea, where it is now very scarce; it was the most esteemed of any in the world. Josephus, Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 2.

rose up full of fervour, and wishing that Clare, who was almost always ill, should benefit by what he had just heard, he sent for her, and conversed with her until the dinner hour on the tender goodness of God to man, even in the dispositions of His Providence, which have the appearance of being the most severe.

Men who are enlightened by the light of faith, must they not be convinced of these Christian truths; that the most perfect have some sins to expiate; that the saints can only attain to heaven by suffering; that the kingdom of heaven, which is invaluable, cannot be purchased at too great a price; and that God never manifests His paternal regard in our favour more evidently, than when He afflicts us in this world in order to show us His mercy in the next. What fruit might not be gathered from sicknesses, and other sufferings; what alleviations, what consolations, and even what joy, might not be found, if these holy truths were but reduced to practice, which unfortunately are only viewed theoretically, and with little or no application.

Francis being at dinner, and beginning to eat, stopped suddenly, and with his eyes raised to heaven, exclaimed in a loud voice: "May God be blessed, glorified, and exalted above all." Then leaving the room in an unusual manner, he threw himself on the ground, where he remained motionless in ecstacy during a whole hour.

When he came to himself, one of the brethren, whose name was Leonard, who had witnessed what had passed, and had heard what he had exclaimed,

spoke to him of it, as if what he had done had been very unbecoming. "My dear brother," said Francis, "I had great cause for what I did, which I will communicate to you confidentially, upon condition that you will tell no one of it during my life-time. If a king promised to give a kingdom to one of his subjects, would not that person have great reason to rejoice? What, then, did I do that was unseemly, I whom the Almighty assured of His kingdom? I was so overpowered with joy, that I could not control the motions of my heart; you must excuse the excess in the expressions of my satisfaction, whatever it may have been, and however it may have seemed to transgress the rules of decorum. But what I did is not enough, I will praise God still more: I will unceasingly praise His holy name. I will sing hymns to His glory during the remainder of my days." (226)

After which he sat down, and after having reflected a little, he got one of his companions to write an Italian Canticle, which begins thus: "Altissimo, Omnipotente, bon Signore; tue son le laude, la gloria, l'onore, ed ogni benedizione, &c." "O God, most high, most powerful, most good, to Thee belong praise, honour, glory, and every blessing; these are solely to be referred to Thee, neither is any man worthy to pronounce Thy holy name. Praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God, by all Thy creatures." He speaks of the sun as the most brilliant of all, of the moon, the stars, the air, the wind, the clouds, the seasons, the water, the fire, the earth and all that it con-

(226) Eccl. li. 15; Ps. lxiii. 35; and ciii. 34.

tains; giving praise to God for each of His creatures, whose beauties and properties He excites.

This canticle resembles that which was sung at Babylon, (227) in the fiery furnace, by the three young men who were thrown into it, for not having adored the statue of Nebuchodonosor. They called upon all creatures, inanimate and irrational to praise God, as David had done before; (228) and St. Francis calls upon all to praise Him, because of His creatures; it comes to the same thing; for inanimate creatures, as St. Jerome observes, only praise God by making Him known to men, and by placing before them His magnificence. When they are considered as His work, says St. Augustine, we find in them numberless reasons for singing hymns to His glory, and if His greatness is manifested in His glorious works, He is not less great in those which are less so. Whatsoever God has made, praises God; there is only sin, of which He is not the author, which does not praise Him. It was Francis's desire that all his brethren should learn his canticle, and recite it daily, and that Brother Pacificus, the famous poet, of whom we have before spoken, and who was then in France, or in the Low Countries, should put it into well-sounding verse. He called it the Canticle of the Sun, because of the pre-eminence of that beautiful planet, in which David

(227) Dan. iii. 37, et seq.

(228) Ps. cxlviii. S. Hier. in cap. iii. Dan. iii. S. Aug. in Ps. lxviii. n. 5, cont. Faust. lib. xxi. cap. 5. et in Epist. Tract. iii. n. 9.

says, there God seemed to have taken up His abode, in order to show Himself to us. (229)

Some days after he had composed this, great strife arose between the Bishop of Assisi, and the magistrates of that place. The Prelate placed them under an interdict, and they in their manner, took a similar course with him, forbidding any one to have intercourse with him, to sell anything to him, or to his people, and to purchase nothing from them. The holy man, deeply grieved at this dissension, and to see that no one interfered to bring about a reconciliation, added the following words to his canticle: "Laudato sia mio Signore, per quelli que perdonano per lo tuo amore, &c." "Be Thou praised, O Lord, for those who for Thy love, pardon offences, and bear patiently tribulation and sickness. Blessed are they who endure all that occurs in peace, because Thou who art the Most High, will crown them." He then said to his companions: "Go confidently from me to the magistrates, and tell them that I beg them to go to the bishop. When they come into his presence, be not bashful, but sing alternately this Canticle, with the last couplet as being God's choristers." His companions complied strictly with all he had ordered. The Bishop and the Magistrates, out of respect for the interference of the saints, consented to see each other; and they had no sooner heard his Canticle sung, than the grace of God, moving their hearts by the artlessness of the words, they embraced each other, and made each other mutual apologies.

(229) Ps. xiii. 5,

As his malady did not show symptoms of amelioration, Elias had him removed from the convent of St. Mary of the Angels, to Foligno, in hopes that change of air might be of service to him. And he was in fact somewhat relieved by it; but God made known by an extraordinary revelation, that he would continue to suffer until death. Elias found himself overpowered with sleep, and in his slumber he saw a venerable old man, clothed in white, with pontifical ornaments, who told him that Francis must prepare himself to suffer patiently for two years more, after which death would deliver him, and would cause him to pass into perfect repose, free from all pain. He communicated this to Francis, who said, that the same thing had been communicated to him ; and then, filled with joy, not only on account of the eternal felicity again promised him, but because the time was fixed when his soul was to be released from the prison of his body, and he added this further couplet to his Canticle, "Be Thou praised, my Lord, for death our sister, from which no living man can escape, &c." "Blessed are they who, at the hour of death, are found confirmed to Thy holy will, for they will not be overtaken by the second death. (230) Woe to those who die in mortal sin—may all creatures praise and bless God, obey Him and serve Him

(230) That which St. John calls in the Apocalypse "the second death." is eternal damnation; and the first death is not the death of the body, but that of the soul by sin, which strips it of the grace of God, its true life. The death of the body is only death, properly speaking, when it occurs in a state of mortal sin, because it places the criminal soul under the empire of the second death, which is damnation. When it occurs

with great humility." If we are surprised to find St. Francis call death our sister, we must bear in mind that the holy man, Job, said to rottenness: "Thou art my father; and to the worms, you are my mother and sister." (231)

His sufferings being somewhat relieved, he was taken back to St. Mary of the Angels, where he wished to have a spiritual conference with brother Bernard, of Quintavalle, the first of his children, but he was then in the adjoining wood, whither according to his custom he had retired for contemplation. He got himself taken there, and called his disciple three times by these affecting words: "Brother Bernard, come and talk to this poor blind man." Bernard, who was wholly absorbed in God, not making any answer, he was somewhat excited and grieved, and before returning, he made the religious who had accompanied him retire to endeavour to discover by means of prayer what could have induced Bernard to have neglected him in this manner. A voice from heaven, addressed these words to him: "Little man, why art thou so disturbed? Must the Creator be given up for the creature? Brother Bernard was conversing with me when you called him; I retained him, not for his consolation only, but in order to teach you, that God does not always leave spiritual men masters of themselves, and able to obey other men; that there are many

and the soul is in a state of grace, it is called, in Christian phraseology, a pleasing sleep, a happy passage. Apoc. ii 11, and xx. 6.

(231) Job. xvii. 14.

things which ought not to be condemned in them, and that their actions are not to be judged of by ordinary rules."

Francis trembling, recalled his guide, and holding him by the hand, he went to several parts of the wood to seek for Brother Bernard, and when he had found him, he prostrated himself at his feet with great humility, and asked pardon for the fault he had committed, and laying himself on his back, "I order you," he said, "to trample on me three times, and to place your foot on my mouth." Bernard, with tears in his eyes, resisted as much as he could; but not daring to disobey such a master, he felt compelled to do as he was ordered. The saints see things in a very different light from what we do, and consider with quite other feelings the errors they fall into. Who would have thought that so trifling an inadvertance was to be expiated by so humiliating and so severe a punishment.

Respecting what was said to St. Francis, that God does not always leave spiritual men masters of themselves, and capable of obeying others, &c., there are some observations to be made, that it may not be misinterpreted. What was said to him was in allusion to a supernatural state when in prayer, wherein God suspends all the powers of the soul, in such a manner that it can neither see, nor hear, nor act, and of certain spiritual actions out of the line of ordinary rules, which God sometimes requires of His servants, as is seen in the Prophets, and in a great number of saints who have been canonized by the Church. It would be

rash, to expect that a person under such circumstances should do all that others would have him do, and to censure his conduct as being out of the ordinary course. This is the sense of what was said to Francis respecting the ecstasy of Bernard, and he knew it by experience, having been often in a state of ecstasy.

But it must not be concluded that any operation of God on a soul ever dispenses it from obeying legitimate authority, since it is His will, as St. Paul says, "that every one shall be submissive to the powers that be," (232) and He cannot contradict Himself. One of the rules which theologians (233) lay down for distinguishing true ecstasies and revelations from false ones, is to examine whether the persons to whom such things occur are regular in their duties, very humble and very obedient. St. Teresa, who was very discerning in these matters, (234) said to her daughters, that if they attempted to unite themselves to God, by any other means than by obedience, they would only unite themselves to their own self-love. By that this excellent saint clearly proved the truth of the extraordinary favours she received from Jesus Christ in prayer, for she obeyed her confessors implicitly, so far as to act directly contrary to the particular inspirations which our Lord imparted

(232) Rom. xiii. 1.

(233) See Card. à Turrecremata Prol. in Revel. S. Brigitt, cap. ii. Gers. de Dist. ver. Revel. à fals. tom. i. fol. 585.

(234) See S. Teresa on the foundation of the monastery of the Carmelites of Medina du Champ, ch. v. In her life, written by herself, chap. xxix. and xxxiii, and in several parts of her works.

to her, on which he said to her : " You do right in obeying, and I will make known the truth."

If St. Francis had found brother Bernard in an ecstasy, and as his superior he had commanded him to come to him, Bernard would have come ; God would have permitted it, but as he did not call him in that capacity, but as a friend, God kept him back, and did not restore him to his senses. In the year 1237, (235) a follower of St. Francis, the blessed brother Giles, of whom we have spoken, was one day motionless in an ecstasy, without any sensation, in the presence of, and in the palace of Pope Gregory IX., at Viterbo, and the holy Father being desirous of testing the effect of obedience on this ecstatical man, said to brother Giles, " I order you in virtue of obedience to resume your usual appearance." At the very moment Giles came to himself, and threw himself at the Pope's feet.

Two things result from what has just been said : 1st. That souls whom it pleases God to honour with peculiar communications have only to answer to their immediate superiors, who are in His place, and that no others are to interfere with them, or to judge their actions, or to endeavour to make them swerve from their purpose. 2ndly. That such souls as are devoted to prayer, are to be greatly respected when God favours them with His supernatural gifts ; but that their humility, their fidelity, and their obedience are to be much

(235) Wading ad ann. 1237, n. 7. Act. 88, 23 April. Vit. B. Ægid. cap. iii. n. 13, et in annot. Lit. H.

more esteemed than their ecstasies, and that it is in those virtues that they are to be imitated.

The whole of the year 1225, Francis passed in various illnesses and in great sufferings. Towards autumn Cardinal Ugolino, and brother Elias induced him to be removed to Rieti, where there were able physicians and surgeons, who could attend to the state of his eyes. As soon as it was known in the town, all the inhabitants met, and went to meet him ; but, in order to avoid all the honours preparing for him, he had himself taken to St. Fabian, a village two miles from Rieti, where he lodged at the curé's.

The Pope was at Rieti, with all his court, at that time ; many of the principal persons of the court, and even Cardinals, came to St. Fabian to visit the holy man. While they were in conversation with him, the persons of their suite went into the curé's vineyard to eat grapes, and they gathered so many that the vineyard was nearly stripped. The curé was much displeased at this, and complained to St. Francis, who asked him, how much he thought he had lost ? "I usually," replied the curé, "have made fourteen measures of wine, which was sufficient for the consumption of my house." "I am sorry," said Francis, "that they should have done you so much damage, but we must hope that God will find a remedy for it, and I firmly believe He will, and that from the grapes which remain in your vineyard, He will give you fourteen measures of wine, and more." The curé saw this prophecy fulfilled, for he made twenty measures from the few grapes which had

been left. The magistrates of Rieti caused, at a subsequent period, a convent to be built for the Friars Minors on this spot, and the same Pope, Gregory IX., out of respect for the saint, chose to consecrate the church himself, in which are still seen representations of the miracle.

After some days Francis could no longer avoid going to Rieti, where the persons of the court received him with honours which he gladly would have dispensed with; and he lodged there with a pious citizen, named Theobald, a Saracen, who had settled in the town.

The dejection of spirits which his suffering had brought upon him made him desirous of having some instrumental music to cheer him; but, says St. Bonaventura, decorum did not allow him to ask for it, and it was God's pleasure that he should receive this agreeable consolation by means of an angel. One night, when he was at prayer, he heard some one walk round his bed playing on the guitar, without his being able to see any one. The sound, which was marvellously harmonious, raised his mind so entirely to God, and filled his soul with so much delight, that he thought himself in the enjoyment of the joys of the other world. His intimate companions perceived it, and they frequently observed that God gave him extraordinary consolations, for the effects they produced on him were so manifest, that it was impossible for him to disguise them, and then he admitted to them from whence they arose.

This shows that if the saintly sufferer wished to hear some instrumental music, it was in order to

listen to it for the glory of God, as St. Augustine observes was the case with David, (236) and not for any purely human gratification, nor to take any ordinary pleasure therein, nor even for the assuagement of his violent sufferings.

It is true that harmonious sound will procure this relief, and without referring to what ancient writers say (237) on this head, without noticing Saul, we know that there are feelings of the body and mind, in which we experience what the wise man supposes to be a common occurrence, "that music rejoices the heart," (238) man being born with a taste for proportion, and finding himself full of concert and harmony, it is no way surprising, that the harmony and proportion of sounds should cause strong and vivid impressions on him.

St. Francis, who may have been naturally more affected by music than others, may also have reasonably wished for its solace, more from a desire to prevent the depression of his spirits from the violence of his sufferings, than from being deprived of the consolation by a principle of mortification. But he was too spiritual a man, not to have us convinced that his wish proceeded from a pure and more noble motive. He desired to prevent his mind from being too greatly depressed, in order to render himself more equal to interior operations, and to unite himself more easily and

(236) S. Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. xvii. cap. 14.

(237) Athenæ. lib. xiv. cap. 5. Plutarch, lib. de Musicâ, n. 12 et 20. Plin. Hist. lib. xxviii. cap. 2. St. Clem. Alex. lib. ii. Pædagog. cap. iv. et Strom. lib. vi. cap. 7. St. Basil. De leg. lib. Gentil. n. 7.

(238) 1 Reg. xvi. xvii. et xxiii. Eccli. xl. 20.

more intimately to God. As the prophet Eliseus, (239) who having been greatly excited against the king of Israel, caused a Canticle of the temple to be sung to him, with a harp accompaniment, in order to calm his irritated mind, and to prepare him for the lights of the Lord, as to the knowledge of future events. St. Augustine also observes, (240) that after his baptism, the chant of the hymns and psalms sung in the Church, excited in his heart tender sentiments of piety, and drew from his eyes floods of tears.

The marvellous effect which the celestial music which God caused him to have, produced in his mind, shows, that on this subject, he entertained similar sentiments to those of the holy doctor, (241) that it is a science given to man by the liberality of the Creator, to represent to them the admirable harmony by which He governs the world, in order to guide them by the channel of the senses, and the melody of sounds to the knowledge and love of immutable truth. This is also the true use of music, and it is only with this view that the Church permits it in the divine service. That which is soft and effeminate, which is calculated to excite the passions, the channel of ambiguous expressions, not the less dangerous for being so cloaked, should be considered by Christians, as an abuse the more deplorable, as it has even been censured and condemned by the pagans. (242)

(239) 4 Reg. iii. 15. St. Greg. in Ezech. lib. i. Hom. i. n. 15,

(240) St. Aug. Confess. lib. ix. cap. 6.

(241) Id. de Orig. Anim. Epist. 166 aliàs 28, n. 13. De Musicâ, lib. vi. n. 1. De Civit. Dei, supra.

(242) Horace says that the Romans, having gained great victories,

All the skill of the physicians and surgeons of Rieti not having had any effect towards the cure of their patient, he had himself taken to his convent of Fonte Colombo, where they were to continue their remedies, and it was their opinion that a hot iron should be applied above his ear, from which it was expected he would obtain relief. For this reason his brethren urged him to give his consent, which he willingly did, in hopes to recover his sight thereby, and then to continue his exertions for the salvation of souls, and also because the operation being very painful, he would have an opportunity of voluntary suffering.

When they were about to apply the red hot iron, he could not avoid feeling a natural sense of fear; in order to overcome it, he addressed the fire as we should speak to a friend: "My brother," said he, "the most High has given you great beauty, and has made you most useful; be favourable to me on this occasion; I entreat the great God who created you, to temper your heat, so that I may be able to bear it." He then made the sign of the cross on the instrument, and with-

gave themselves up with impunity to spending their festival days in drinking and diverting themselves; that licentiousness then seized upon verse and music, and that the flute player added the lasciviousness of his gestures to the tones of his art, which were previously chaste and solemn.

Postquam cœpit agros extendere victor, et urbem
Latior amplecti murus, vinoque diurno
Placari Genius, festis impune diebus,
Accessit numerisque modisque licentia major....
Sic priscæ motumque et luxuriam addidit arti
Tibicen. *De Arte Poet.*

Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Pliny, in their days contrasted the simplicity, gravity, and solemnity of the ancient music with the licence and lasciviousness of the new.

out any fear presented himself to receive the impression. His companions, not having courage to witness the operation, left the room. The physician and surgeon remained alone with him, and the hot iron was pressed from over his ear to his eyebrow, into his flesh, which was very tender.

After the operation, the brothers having returned, he said to them: "Praise the Lord, for I assure you I neither felt the heat of the fire, nor any pain." Then he reproached them mildly in these words: "Why did you fly, you pusillanimous men, and of little faith? He who preserved the three young men in the furnace of Babylon, (243) could He not temper in my favour the heat of my brother the fire?" We shall see further what an exalted principle it was which induced him to qualify all creatures by the names of his brothers and sisters. He said to the physician, "If the flesh is not sufficiently burnt, replace the hot iron." The physician, struck with so much fortitude in so feeble a body, saw that it was miraculous, and said to the religious: "I see truly to-day a most wonderful occurrence."

St. Bonaventura, who relates this, makes the following observation: That Francis having attained so high a degree of perfection, his body was subject to his mind, and his mind to God; with admirable harmony it followed from thence, by a peculiar disposition of Divine Providence, that inanimate creatures which obey God, obeyed His servant also, and forebore from hurting him, ac-

(243) Dan. iii. 50.

cording to this : "O Lord, (244) the creature being subject to Thee, as to its Creator, renovates its strength to torment the wicked, and softens it to contribute to the good of those who trust in Thee."

It is, moreover, remarkable that St. Francis feared when he saw the red-hot iron; he who had consented to have the remedy applied, because it was severe, and who had offered when in Egypt to cast himself into the fire to prove the truth of the Christian Religion. It is thus that God permits His saints to become sensible of their natural weakness in trifling things, (245) in order that they may be sensible that in greater things all their strength depends upon His grace.

In sickness and in health Francis unceasingly shed abundance of tears ; it was an effect of the gift he had received, and of his tender devotion ; but he told his brethren that he wept for the expiation of his sins, although he had attained to an extraordinary purity of mind and body ; he

(244) In the Book of Wisdom, the manna is spoken of which melted when it was exposed to the sun, but that fire, instead of melting it, bake it, and rendered it fit for being eaten by the Hebrews, which was wonderful ; for the manna was a sort of dew, similar to the small particles of ice which are seen on the grass in hoar frosts; and the fire sent from heaven against the Egyptians with an extraordinary quantity of rain, instead of being extinguished by the vast proportion of water, was only more violent, and burnt everything. Exod. cap, xvi. 14 ; cap. ix. 23, et seq. Ps. civ. 31, Sap. xvi. 17 et 19.

(245) The illustrious martyr, Saint Felicitas, the companion of St. Perpetua, being in labour, in the prison in which she had been thrown for the faith of Jesus Christ, and screaming from the violence of the pain she suffered, one of the guards asked her what she would do when she should be exposed to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, and she made this beautiful reply: "It is I who suffer at the present moment; but there, there will be another who will suffer in me and for me, because I shall there suffer for Him." S. Augustin, serm. 281, cap. 3. Act. Sinc. Mart. page 93, n. 15.

laid it down to them as a maxim, that those who strive to attain perfection ought daily to purify themselves by tears of repentance. The reason he gave for this, was, that man being clothed with frail flesh, could not so perfectly imitate the Lamb without spot, who was crucified, as not to commit some faults occasionally. St. Augustine (246) was of a similar way of thinking, and maintained that either the laity or the clergy, of the most exemplary lives, must be careful not to leave this world without having made a true penance proportioned to their respective wants. He himself, when on the bed of death, recited the Penitential Psalms with great compunction, shedding at the same time abundance of tears.

The disorder in the eyes of St. Francis was caused by the tears he continually shed. His physician told him he ought to restrain them, unless he wished to lose his entire sight; and this is the reply he gave him: "My dear Brother Doctor, for the love of corporal sight, which we enjoy in common with flies, we must not set aside for a single instant the Divine illustrations; for the mind has not received this favour on account of the body, it has been granted to the body on account of the mind." He liked better, says St. Bonaventura, to lose corporal sight than to check for a single moment that tender and affectionate devotion which calls forth tears, by which the interior sight is purified and rendered competent to see an infinitely pure God.

What he said to his physician on the fear of

(246) Possid. Vit. S. Augst. cap. xxxi.

losing his sight, is in accordance with the views of St. Anthony, the patriarch, (247) of cenobitical life, which he communicated to the celebrated Didymus, on the grief of having lost it. Conversing one day with this learned man, who was blind, and sensible of the pain this loss caused him: "I am surprised," he said, "that being so wise and learned as you are, you should be grieved at being deprived of what ants and flies have, and that you do not on the contrary rejoice in not possessing what the saints and apostles have alone desired to have." (248) Such is the way in which the saints estimated the good and evil of the things of this world, and, as all Christians ought to estimate them, by the light of faith.

In order to show some gratitude to the physician for the trouble he took in his regard, Francis one day desired the brethren, in his presence, to take him to dine with them. They represented to him that their poverty was such that they had nothing which was fit to place before a person of his consideration, for this physician was in great estimation, and very rich. "Men of little faith," replied the saint, "why have you these doubts? Why have you not considered more favourably the merit of obedience? go and take to the refectory our honourable brother the doctor." They took him, seeing that he would consent to partake of their poor fare out of devotion, but just as they were sitting down to table there was a ring at the bell; it was a woman, who brought in a basket

(247) Vit. S. Ant. n. 68 & 69, tom. i. Oper. S. Athan.

(248) S. Hier. Epist. 100, alias 33, ad Castruc.

several dishes exceedingly well dressed, which a lady, who lived at a country house, six miles off, sent to the servant of God. He desired that these might be offered to the physician, and that he might be told that the Lord took care of His own. The doctor admired the hand of Providence, and said to the religious: "My brethren, we do not sufficiently understand the holiness of this man, and even you who live with him, have no conception of the secret virtue with which his mind is replenished."

This physician was not less charitable than learned; he had great pleasure in prescribing for this sick man, he frequently visited him, and paid the expense of the medicines he required. God, who considered as done to Himself, what was done to His servant, who could not repay him, rewarded him in this world by a miracle worked in his favour.

He had laid out all his ready money in building a house which was only just finished, when one of the principal walls was found to have a large crack in it from the top to the bottom, which no human art could make good. Full of faith and confidence in the merits of Francis, he begged his companions to give him something which the holy man had touched. After many entreaties they gave him some of his hair, which he placed at night in the fissure in the wall. He came back in the morning, and found the whole so completely closed, that not only he could not get back the hair, but it was no longer perceivable that there had been any rent in the wall. The

good offices which he had manifested to a worn-out body, prevented, says St. Bonaventura, the ruin of the house he had just built.

Some days after, Francis was taken to Rieti, where the bishop lodged him in his palace; they brought to the foot of his bed, upon a tressel, one of the canons, who was dangerously ill; he had been a very worldly man, who had lived a dissipated life, but who, struck with the fear of approaching death, entreated the saint to make the sign of the cross upon him. "How," said Francis, "shall I make the sign of the cross on you, who, without any fear of the judgments of God, have given yourself up to the lusts of the flesh? I will do it, however, because of the pious persons who have interceded in your favour. But, bear in mind, that you will suffer much greater ills, if, after your cure, you should return to the vomit; for the sin of ingratitude makes the last state of the man worse than the former."(249) He then made the sign of the cross upon the sick man, who immediately arose, praised God, and exclaimed, "I am healed." All the bystanders heard his bones crack, as when dry sticks are broken. That unhappy man, however, did not remain long without plunging again into vice; and one night, as he was in bed at the house of a canon where he had supped, the roof of the house fell in and crushed him, without hurting anyone else.

"It was," says the same holy doctor, "by a just judgment of God; for the sin of ingratitude, is a

(249) Math. xii. 14. John xv. 14.

contempt of the graces of God for which we ought to be most thankful, and the sins into which we again fall after repentance, displease Him more than any others. Will it never be understood, that in the diseases of the soul, as in those of the body, there is nothing so dangerous as a relapse ?"

The pains felt by Francis, were in some degree assuaged, his sight was restored, and he made use of this interval to have himself taken into several parts of Umbria, of the kingdom of Naples, and of the adjacent provinces, in order to work for the salvation of souls. At Penna, a young religious who was naturally good, and of great promise, came to ask his pardon for having left the order ; which he had only done at the instigation of the evil spirit, who persuaded him that by living privately he could better sanctify himself. As soon as the saint saw him, he fled to the cell and shut the door ; when he came out again, his companions had expressed their surprise at what he had done ; " Do not be astonished," he said, " at my having fled ; I saw on this young man a frightful demon, who was endeavouring to throw him down the precipice, and I acknowledge to you that I could not bear his presence. I have prayed as earnestly as I could for the deliverance of this poor brother from such a seducer, and God has heard my prayer." Then having sent for him, and telling him what he had seen, he exhorted him to be on his guard against the snares of the devil, and not to separate himself again from his brethren: "For if you do otherwise," he added, " you will not fail

to fall into the precipice from which the mercy of God has preserved you." The docile and faithful religious passed the remainder of his days in great piety, and in the exercises of a regular life.

At Calano, a town of the dutchy of Marsi, in the farther Abruzzo, where Francis was come to preach, a common soldier pressed him so earnestly to come and dine with him, that he could make no excuse. He therefore went, with one companion, who was a priest, a circumstance which was very serviceable. The poor family of the soldier having received them with great joy, the Saint began to pray as was his custom, and he had his eyes constantly raised to heaven. He then said to the soldier, privately, "My brother, and my host, you see I have acceded to your request in coming to dine with you. Now, follow my advice, and make haste; for it is not here, but elsewhere that you will dine. Confess your sins with as much exactness and sorrow as you can; the Lord will reward you for having received His poor ones with such good religious intentions." The soldier placing confidence in what the servant of God said to him, made his confession to Francis' companion, regulated his temporal affairs, and prepared himself as well as he could for death. When that was done, he sat down with the others to table, and a minute afterwards he expired suddenly. Then were the words of the Gospel fulfilled,(250) that he who should receive a prophet, as a prophet, that is to say, not seeing in him any

(250) Math. x. 41.

other qualification, receives also the reward of the prophet; inasmuch as the prediction of Francis enabled him to fortify himself by penance against death, which he did not think to be so near at hand; and that his merits brought him nearer to the enjoyment of eternal happiness.

It was probably in this apostolic tour that the servant of God performed a miracle on the person of St. Bonaventura, who, under the dispositions of Divine Providence, was to become one of the most illustrious of his children. He was born at Bagnaréa in Tuscany, a town belonging to the ecclesiastical states, in the year 1221, and he was baptized by the name of John. His father, John Fidenza, and Ritella, his mother, joined to the nobility of their birth a large fund of piety. In his infancy he was seized with a mortal illness, of which he was cured by St. Francis, which was one of the reasons why he determined to write his Life. "I should fear," he says in his preface to his Legend, "that I should be accused of criminal ingratitude if I neglected to publish the praises of him, to whom I acknowledge that I owe the life of my body and my soul."

It is reported with the circumstances which he himself may have told, and the memory of which, may have been preserved by tradition, that his mother having no further hopes of saving him by means of medicaments, (251) came and presented him to St. Francis, who was renowned in Italy, at that time, for the splendour of his sanc-

(251) Petr. Galasin. in Vit. S. Bonav. cap. iv.

tity and his miracles; she implored(252) the aid of his prayers, and made a vow that if the child was saved, she would give him to his order; the holy man consoled the afflicted mother, and obtained from God the cure of her son, to the great astonishment of the physicians, who had deemed his disorder incurable; at the sight of this miraculous cure, he said in the Italian language: "O buona ventura." (253) "How fortunate!" from whence came the name (254) of Bonaventura, and finally, he foretold that the child would become a great light in the Church of God, (255) and that through him His Order would receive great increase of sanctity. (256)

(252) Octavian. de S. Bonav. Orat. § 4.

(253) Wading, ad ann. 1221, n. 45.

(254) He added to it the name of John, Frater Joannes Bonaventura; others before him had borne the name of Bonaventura, as Wading and the continuators of Bollandus observe. Wading, ad ann. 1221, n. 45. Act. SS. Vit. S. Bonav. 14, Jul. Comment. § 3. The Greeks called him in their language Eutuches, which means happy, and is similar to Bonaventura. Some have called him Eustathius and Eustachius, but erroneously, or only to notice according to their signification, that he maintained the truths of religion with unmoveable firmness, and that he was in the Church as soil abounding in good graces.

(255) Octav. supra. § 13.

(256) The continuators of Bollandus consider the circumstances doubtful, by the very expressions of S. Bonaventura in the preface to his Legend, which give room to suppose that S. Francis was already in Heaven when his mother prayed for his cure. We cannot avoid admitting that their remark is judicious, and worthy of examination; nevertheless, since they do not bring it forward as positive proof, as in fact, it may be controverted, we adhere to the common opinion. Whatever may be as the circumstances, the fact is beyond dispute, that Bonaventura was snatched from the jaws of death by the merits of Saint Francis. Neither can it be denied that he was a great man in the Church, nor that the Order of Friars Minors received a great increase of sanctity through him. The only thing in question therefore, is, as to one prediction more or less in the Life of the Blessed Patriarch, where so many are incontestable. Act. SS. Supra Comment. § 3.

In the year 1243, then twenty-two years old, he proposed to fulfil his mother's vow, and take the habit of a Friar Minor. This is not the place to narrate his illustrious actions, but we must notice two remarkable circumstances which are connected with St. Francis.

The first is, that as this blessed patriarch bears the name of Seraphic, because of the divine love with which he was inflamed, when Jesus Christ, under the figure of a Seraph, imprinted on him the sacred stigmata, so St. Bonaventura has been called the Seraphic doctor, "because his whole doctrine, as well as his whole life, breathe the fire of charity." It is a torch which burns and illuminates; (258) It influences while instructing; whatever truths he expounds, he brings back all to God by love, and to define him properly, he should be styled the Seraphic and Cherubic doctor. (259) 'Tis thus that Gerson, the Chancellor of the University of Paris expresses himself.

"If I am asked," he continues, "which amongst the doctors seems to me the best calculated to instruct, I answer, without detracting from any other, it is Bonaventura, because he is sure, solid, exact, and devout, at one and the same time; and separating from his theology all questions foreign from the purpose, all superfluous dialectic, and that obscurity of terms with which so many others load their works, he turns into piety all the beautiful lights he gives to the mind. In a word, there is not a doctrine more mild, more salutary,

(257) Joan. v. 35.

(258) Gers. de Exam. Doct. et Epist. de Laud. Bon. p. 553. et seq. tom. I, Edit. Par. 1606.

more sublime, than his ; and indevotion alone can neglect it. As to me," he adds, "having recommenced studying it since I am grown old, the more I advance the more I am confounded, and I say to myself: 'What is the use of so much talking, and so much writing? here is a doctrine which is quite sufficient of itself, and it is only necessary to transcribe and to spread it into facts.'" Such is the opinion of the celebrated Gerson, as to St. Bonaventura, before he was canonized, declared a doctor of the Church, and honoured by the title of Seraphic, which he shares with his blessed Father. The Abbot Trithemius, of the Order of St. Benedict, passes a similar eulogium on him, to which the Sovereign Pontiffs, Sixtus IV., and Sixtus V., have added the crowning point in their Bulls, the one for his canonization the other for his doctorship.

The second particularity of his life, which has relation to St. Francis, is, that he gloriously verified his prediction as to the fruits of sanctity which he was to bring to the Order. Having been elected general when he was five and thirty years of age, in consequence of his great talents and eminent virtues, he governed his brethren for eighteen years with so much zeal, light, mildness, and wisdom, that he perfectly made amends for the evil which the relaxation of some, and the perplexity of others, had occasioned. He prepared such judicious regulations for the form of government, for the recital of the Divine Office, for the regularity of discipline, that they have served as a basis and

foundation for all the statutes which have since been introduced into the order.

He decided on the difficulties which occurred as to the observation of the Rules, and this with so much precision, that in order to follow them exactly and conscientiously, without scruple, it is only necessary to practise what he has clearly laid down. He composed spiritual treatises so elevated, so instructive, and so affecting, that they are alone sufficient to guide the Friars Minors, or all other persons of piety, to the sublimest perfection. He answered with so much strength and judgment the philosophers of his day, who attacked the Mendicant Orders, despite of the sovereign Pontiffs, by whom they were approved, that his works, with those of the angelic doctor, St. Thomas of Aquino, will ever cover with confusion whosoever may attempt to renew the former disputes on this head.

The exertions which St. Francis made, during a short interval from pain, for the salvation of souls, in an unfavourable season of the year, increased all his maladies. His legs became inflamed, and he was obliged to lay up in a small hamlet near Nocera. When this was known at Assisi, the fear they had lest he should die on the way, and lest his country should be deprived of his precious remains, induced the authorities to send means to bring him into the town.

This deputation returning with the patient, arrived at the dinner hour in the village of Sarthiano, where they found nothing to be purchased for their meal, although they offered a double price

for every thing they wanted. Upon their complaining of this, Francis said: "You have not found anything, because you have had greater confidence in your flies than in the Lord;" (he called their money flies,) "but return to the houses where you have been, and ask them humbly for alms, offering to pray to God for them in payment. Don't think, under false impressions, that there is anything mean or shameful in this, for since sin came into the world, all the good which God so liberally bestows on man, on the just, and on sinners, on the worthy and unworthy, is done by means of alms, and He is the chief Almsgiver." These men overcame their bashfulness, and went cheerfully to beg for the love of God, and got whatever they wanted, although they had not been able to obtain it for money; God having so touched the hearts of the inhabitants, that in giving what they had they offered spontaneously every other service.

In this destitution where money was of no use, the rich poverty of Francis was a fortunate supplement, observes St. Bonaventura; and the instruction he gave in denominating all the bounties of God as so many alms from the time man had fallen into sin, is a lesson for those worldlings who despise the state of voluntary dependence on the charity of the faithful. It is an article of faith, that sin has reduced us all to a state of extreme poverty, which can only be relieved by the gratuitous liberality of the Lord, which is a pure alms. Although we may, with the grace which He infuses into us, justly merit an increase of that grace, and

win eternal life, "yet," says St. Augustine, (259) " our merits are the gifts of God, and must be considered as charitable gifts, not only because they are based upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and are His gratuitous promises, but because the commencement of all merit is a grace bestowed out of pure mercy to a sinner who is unworthy of it."

And for this reason St. Augustine (260) represents to himself all men before God, as beggars before the doors of Him who is infinitely rich, who beg for bread, for grace, and for His kingdom. Thus men of the world ought not to feel such contempt for mendicity; they are all obliged to beg, and they do so not only to God, but also to other men, those in the highest conditions of life as well as those of the lowest. What are courtiers, as respects their sovereign, more than professional beggars? This sort of mendicity is not considered disgraceful, because it has for its object splendid advantages, but in the eyes of faith, and even in just reasoning, it is still more disgraceful, inasmuch as it has its origin in immoderate cupidity.

All these reflections were contained in the short instruction of St. Francis, and they show us that the spirit of God, which is manifested to us by the mouths of His saints, as in the Holy Scriptures, says great things in few and concise words.

The Bishop of Assisi had the man of God brought to his palace, and kept him there till the spring of the year 1226, providing him with every-

(259) S. Aug. serm. 333, n. 5, in Psal. xxxviii. n. 8, lib. de Grat. et lib arb. n. 15. Epist. 194. no. 19, edit. Bened.

(260) Id. in Psalm cxlii. n. 17, serm. 56, n. 9. Serm. 63, n. 2.

thing he required with great affection. One day, when his stomach loathed everything, he expressed a wish for a particular sort of fish, which the severity of the winter made it difficult to procure, but at the very moment a messenger sent by brother Gerald, the guardian of the convent of Rieti, brought three large fish of this species, with certain sauces which were calculated to sharpen the appetite and strengthen the patient. Thus it is that it sometimes pleases the Lord to give sensible relief to His friends who have neglected their health and crucified their flesh for His sake.

The children of the holy patriarch, and particularly Elias, his vicar general, who saw that there was no amelioration in the state of his health, but that, on the contrary, his disorders increased with the renewal of the year, entreated him to allow himself to be removed to Sienna, where the mild climate, and the excellence of the physicians, might afford him some relief, if there were no hopes of a cure. And they urged this so energetically, that as he was mild and obliging he consented to be taken thither at the beginning of April. But all his ills continued, and the disorder of his eyes was greatly increased. A red-hot iron was again applied to both sides of his head, from the ears to the eyebrows; but this had no good effect, though he suffered no pain from it, God having renewed the miracle He had before performed in his favour.

He received many visits while at Sienna, particularly from the Friars Preachers, who knew the strict friendship which bound him to St. Dominic.

At the end of the volume we propose placing on record the learned answers he made them on difficult questions which they put to him. One of them, a doctor in theology, having learnt that Francis had foretold to one of his friends in the town what would happen to him at his death, had some doubts on the subject, and came to Francis and asked him if it was true. The saint assured him it was, and foretold at the same time to the doctor his own death, which he had made no inquiries about; and in order to impress the certitude of it more strongly on him, he spoke to him of a certain scruple which lay on his conscience, and which he had not communicated to any one, and he explained the subject so clearly to him, that he quite removed his perplexity. The doctor was made fully aware by this miraculous cognition, that the servant of God had the spirit of prophecy, and he was the more convinced of it at his own death, which happened in conformity with the prediction.

The mild air of Sienna, and the attentive care of the physicians, did not prevent the sufferings of Francis from continuing and increasing. During one night he vomited so much blood, and he was to such a degree weakened from it, that it was thought he was about to expire. His children, cast down and in tears, came to him, like the disciples of St. Martin, (261) when he was on the point of death, and said to him, sobbing,

"Dear Father and master, we are greatly distressed to see you suffer so intensely, but we are

(261) Sulp. Sev. epist. ad Bassul.

likewise afflicted for ourselves. After all your labours you are about to go to the enjoyment of eternal repose, but we shall remain without our father and pastor ; you have begotten us in Jesus Christ by the doctrine of the Gospel, and we are scarcely born before we lose you. Who will instruct us ? Who will console us ? You have been everything to us, your presence has been our happiness. To whom do you consign us, in the desolate state in which we are ? Alas ! we foresee that after your departure ravenous wolves will invade your flock. Leave us, at least, something of yours to remind us of your instructions, in order that we may follow them when you are no more, and give us your blessing, which may be our shield against our enemies."

The holy patriarch, casting his eyes affectionately on his children, called to him Brother Benedict of Piratro, who was his infirmarian, and who, during his illness, said mass in his room : "Priest of God," said he, "commit to writing the blessing I give to all my brethren, as well to those who are now in the Order, as to those who shall embrace it to the end of the world. As my great sufferings and extreme weakness prevent me from speaking, here are in few words my intentions and last wishes : 'May all the brethren love each other as I have loved them, and as I now love them. May they always cherish and adhere to poverty, which is my lady and my mistress ; and never let them cease from being submissive and faithfully attached to the prelates and all the

clergy. May the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless and protect them. Amen.'"

His sufferings being in some degree modified, and his weakness no longer so intense, his zeal induced him to think of instructing and exhorting the absent, for, by the example of the Son of God, he loved his own even to the last. (262) As he could no longer make use of his speech for their sanctification, he caused his companions to write a letter, which he addressed to the minister general of the whole Order, in which, after very salutary instructions, he confessed his sins with great humility. We reserve this for the last book because it is very long, and the reflections which arise from its consideration would carry us at this time too far.

As soon as Brother Elias, the vicar general, learnt the extreme danger in which the Father was, he came in great haste to Sienna, and proposed to him to be removed to the convent of Celles, near Cortona. Francis was very glad to see him, and was quite willing to be removed to Celles, where he was attended with great care by the relations and friends of Elias, who were of that country. But as he became swollen, and the sufferings of his stomach and liver were greatly increased, he requested to be taken to Assisi; which the vicar general had done with all the care and precaution possible. His return was a source of extraordinary gratification to the inhabitants, who had been fearful of being deprived of so great a treasure had he died elsewhere. They went in

(262) Joan. xiii. 1.

crowds to meet him, with great expressions of pleasure, and the bishop received him again into his palace.

Before we put on record the last acts and precious death of St. Francis, it will be proper to notice the state in which his Order was at that time. There were some of his brethren in all parts of the known world. In Europe they filled all Italy. Greece furnished them a province. The esteem of the great, and the love of the people, procured for them daily new houses in Spain, Portugal, France, the Low Countries, and England. They had spread into Scotland, and began to be received in Ireland. Brother Albert of Pisa had sent missioners into Upper and Lower Germany with great success. They had penetrated into Poland, and into the countries of the north. In Asia, those whom the holy patriarch had left, with others who followed, multiplied the missions among the Saracens. In Africa they continued to preach Jesus Christ to the Mohamedans, and we see by letters dated from Rieti, the 7th October, 1225, which Pope Honorius addressed to the Friars Preachers and Minors, destined by the apostolic see for the mission into the kingdom of the Miramolin, and to whom he gave very extensive powers; saying of them "that they renounced themselves, and desired to sacrifice their lives for Jesus Christ in order to gain souls for Him."

The second order instituted by Francis, and called that of the Poor Dames, spread itself also throughout Europe, and the third order of Penance likewise made great progress.

The children of this holy patriarch being thus spread in all parts, preached the Gospel to the infidels, repressed heresies, attacked vice, inspired virtue, and gave admirable examples of poverty, humility, penance, and all perfection.

Anthony of Padua preached in Italy and France with so much lustre, that he has ever been considered as one of the most marvellous preachers which Italy ever saw. The strength and the unction of his discourses, the eminent sanctity of his life, the evidence of his miracles, (263) changed the face of the towns in which he announced the word of God. His auditors, penetrated with compunction, and bursting into tears, excited each other to works of penance; the revengeful, the lascivious, the avaricious, the usurers became converted, and resorted to the tribunals of penance, and the number of priests were insufficient to hear the confessions.

In the year 1225 he came to Toulouse, (264) and visited other towns of France, where his principal object was to confront the heretics. Animated with the same spirit which inspired his Father Francis with so perfect an attachment to the Roman Church and the Holy See, he was the declared enemy of all errors, and he laboured with all his strength to root them out. By quotations from the Holy Scriptures, with which he was intimately conversant, and the sense of which

(263) It is not from Baillet that the miracles of S. Anthony of Padua are to be judged; he rejects them all in his usual manner; but the most judicious critics, such as the continuators of Bollandus, admit the truth of them, and produce the proofs. Act. SS. 13. Jan.

(264) Sur. et Act. SS. vit. S. Anton. 13. Jan.

he perfectly understood, and by the solidity of his reasoning he confounded the sectarians, and created a great horror of the false doctrines they taught. With admirable tact he discovered their artifices and frauds, which he laid before the people to preserve them from their seduction; and, in fine, he pursued them with so much vigour and perseverance, that the faithful gave him the name of the indefatigable mallet of the heretics; none of them ventured to enter the lists with him, nor even to open a mouth in his presence.

God favoured him by converting (265) a very great number of their supporters, and what is very singular, many of the heads of their party. At Bourges a man whose name was Guiald, and whom the historian calls an heresiarch, was so convinced by the power of his words, and by a marked miracle of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, that he persevered till death in the Catholic faith, and in submission to the Church. Another named Bonneville, or Banal, who is also stated to have been an heresiarch, who had been thirty years buried in the darkness of errors, was converted in a similar manner at Rimini by the sermons of St. Anthony, and had a like perseverance. It must be admitted that the favour is very rare. It has been remarked that amongst all the authors of heresies, and the chiefs of the sects, there are scarcely any who have been sincerely restored to the Church; they have obstinately presisted in their errors until death, although they had seen them condemned, and

(265) Ib. Sur. cap. 9 and 17. Act. SS. pag. 708 and 725.

some of them were long-lived. It would be easy to adduce examples less remote from our days than that of Theodore Beza, who at the age of seventy resisted the pressing solicitations of St. Francis de Sales, (266) and died some years afterwards in the errors of Calvin, whose successor he was. It is a just judgment of God against these proud men, who have rebelled against their mother the Church, who lose an infinity of souls by the ill use they make of their talents, authority, and all other means by which they seduce them.

The state in which, as we have just shown, St. Francis left his Order when on the point of death, must be looked upon as one of the principal marvels of his life. God had predestined him for this great work; he laboured at it for eighteen years without ceasing, with all possible assiduity, and on the eve of quitting this world, he might say, in conforming himself to Jesus Christ, after having profited by His grace, "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do, I now go to Thee." (267) Happy the Chris-

(266) He went by order of Pope Clement VIII. to Geneva to confer with Theodore Beza, to induce him to return into the Catholic Church, and he returned there three times to the great peril of his life. Beza was so much moved, so taken up by the reasoning and the mildness of S. Francis de Sales, that pressing his hand, and raising his eyes to Heaven, he said with a sigh: "If I am not in the right way, I daily pray to God, in His infinite mercy, to lead me into it." He felt more than any other the weakness of his party; his conscience filled him with piognant remorse, he was agitated, and his agitation was visible in his countenance; nevertheless he did not surrender; human respect, long habit, the shame of unsaying, and certain secret engagements, prevented his embracing the truth of which he was convinced. Life of S. Francis de Sales by Marsallier lib. iii.

(267) Joan. xvii. 4, and 13.

tian whose conscience bears him thus out on the bed of death, who can say that he has endeavoured to do what God required of him, and fulfilled the duties of his profession.

BOOK V.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

BOOK V.

The cruel and continued pain under which the holy patriarch suffered, did not prevent his giving instruction to his children, his providing for their spiritual wants, and giving answers, with admirable presence of mind, to various questions which were put to him relative to the observance of the Rule, and the government of the Order. He spoke as freely, and with as much composure, as if he felt no inconvenience. As his body became weaker his mind seemed to acquire fresh vigour. We do not insert here the admirable things he then said, because they would occupy too much space, but they will be found at the end of this work.

One day, when his sufferings were greatly aggravated, he remarked that they were taking great pains in endeavouring to afford him relief, and fearing that fatigue would cause some of those who were about him to become impatient, or that they might complain that their attendance on him

prevented them from applying to their spiritual exercises, he addressed them affectionately, saying: "My dear children, don't tire of the trouble you take for me, for our Lord will reward you both in this life and in the next for all you do for His little servant, and if my illness takes up your time, be assured that you will gain more from it than if you were to labour for yourselves, because the aid you give me is given to the entire religious, and to the lives of the brethren. I also assure you that God will be your debtor for all that you will spend for me."

It is very true that those who assisted the saint in his illness laboured for the entire religious, and for the spiritual life of his brethren, because they aided in the preservation of him who was so necessary to his Order, and they put it in his power to give further instructions to his brethren who were now in it, and to those who were to enter it in future.

On another occasion, when his sufferings were apparently bringing him to extremity, one of his infirmarians said to him: "Brother, pray that God may treat you with less severity, for it seems that His hand presses too severely upon you." At these words Francis exclaimed in a loud voice: "If," said he, "I was not aware of the simplicity and uprightness of your heart, I should not dare to remain in the same house with you from this instant, who have had the rashness to criticise the judgments of God in my regard;" and immediately, notwithstanding the weak state in which he was, he threw himself on the ground

with such violence that his worn-out bones were all bruised; he kissed the ground and exclaimed: "My God, I return Thee thanks for the pains I endure, and I pray Thee to add to them an hundred-fold, if such should be Thy good pleasure. It will be pleasing to me to know that in afflicting me Thou dost not spare me, for the greatest consolation I can enjoy is, that Thy holy will shall be fulfilled." He had in his sufferings similar feelings to those of holy Job, (1) and he expressed himself in a similar manner. Ought not all Christians to have such feelings in their illnesses and other afflictions? Are the saints not to be imitated in this? May we not, by the grace of God, which assuredly will not be wanting, practise those virtues by which they become saints?

Clara and her daughters, hearing that their father was so dangerously ill, sent to express to him the grief which it caused them, and they entreated him to mitigate their sorrow by sending them at least his blessing. The holy patriarch, full of tenderness for these pious virgins, and sympathising in their grief, and in that which they would feel on his death, sent them some verses he had composed in the praise of the Lord, and added to them a letter of exhortation, in which doubtless he gave them his blessing most amply, but this is not found in his works.

We find in them only the following fragment, which may belong to the letter he had written to them at that time. I, brother Francis, little man, I choose to follow the example of the life and

(1) Job, vi. 9 and 10.

poverty of Jesus Christ, our most high Lord, and that of His holy mother, and to persevere in it to the end. I beg you also, all you whom I consider as my Ladies, and I recommend you to conform yourselves at all times to this life and to this poverty, the sanctity of which is so great. Be careful not to swerve from it in the least, nor to listen to any advice, nor to anything which may be said to contravene it."

The oldest historians of the Order say that in the letter he sent them shortly before his death, he entreated them, that as the Lord had brought them together from many places, in order that they might apply themselves to the practice of the sacred virtues of charity, humility, poverty, and obedience, they should use every effort to pass their lives accordingly, and to die in their perseverance. He exhorts those of his sisters who were suffering from sickness, to have patience under their ills. And because he knew how austere they were, he recommended them to use with discretion, and with joy and thankfulness, the alms which Divine Providence sent them. In fine, he promised Clare that she should see him, and, in fact, after his death she and her daughters did see him, as shall hereafter be related.

The same writers add, that he had always entertained peculiar affection and regard for these holy religious females, thinking that the holiness of their life, which had been from the beginning one of great poverty and mortification, reflected glory on the religious state, and was a source of great edification to the whole Church. He wrote

to them several other times, to encourage them in virtue, and particularly in the love of poverty, as we find by the will of St. Clare, (2) but the letters are not extant.

Even at this day we are sensible of the truth of what he said ; nothing is more glorious for the regular religious state, and nothing more edifying for the whole Church, than to see the nuns of St. Clare, who keep the rule of their order without the slightest mitigation, who renounce the possession of any property whatsoever, whether private or in common, who live wholly on alms, and in such a state of rigorous austerity, that the stronger sex would find to be quite appalling. In no other monasteries, notwithstanding, are more harmony, more content, more liberty of mind, or more of that joy found, of which our Saviour has said : "That it is in the heart that their joy shall be full, and that no man shall take it from them." (3)

As soon as it was known in Assisi that the holy man was at the point of death, the magistrates placed guards round the episcopal palace, with orders to keep strict watch, lest his body should be taken away the moment he should have expired, and thus the city should be deprived of so precious a treasure.

The physician, whose name was John Lebon, a native of Arezzo, communicated to him that death was approaching, his brethren told him the same thing. Full of joy he began to praise God, and having caused some of the choir singers to be

(2) Wading, ad ann. 1253, No. 5. (3) John xvi. 22 and 24.

called in, he sang with them in a loud voice the last verses which he had added to the Canticle of the Sun, "Be praised, O Lord, for the death of our sister, which no man living on earth can escape," &c. Elias, whose thoughts were always governed by human prudence, was fearful lest his singing should be considered a weakness of mind, arising from the fear of death, and entreated him to stop. "Brother," replied Francis, with extraordinary fervour, "permit me to rejoice in the Lord, and to thank Him for the great tranquillity of my conscience. I am, through His mercy and His grace, so united to my God, that I have just reason to manifest the joy that He gives me, who is the high and most liberal Giver of all good gifts; and do not imagine that I am so wanting in courage as to tremble at the approach of death."

He had his children brought to him, and he blessed each one of them as the patriarch Jacob had done, (4) giving to each an appropriate blessing. Then after the example of Moses, (5) who blessed all the faithful Israelites, he gave a general and ample blessing to the whole order.

As he had stretched his arms one over the other in the form of a cross, as Jacob (6) had done in blessing the children of Joseph, his right hand came upon the head of Elias, who was kneeling on his left. He asked who it was, for his sight was quite gone, and being answered that it was brother Elias, "'Tis well," he said, "my right

(4) Genesis xlix. 28. (5) Deuteron. xx. 2.

(6) Genesis xlviii. 14.

hand is properly placed on him. My son, I bless you in all and above all. Inasmuch as under your hand the Most High has increased the number of my brethren and children; thus I bless them all in you. May God, the Sovereign Lord of all things, bless you in heaven and on earth. As for me, I bless you as far as is in my power, and even more than that; but may He who can do all, do in you what I cannot. I pray that God may bear in mind your labours and your works, and that He may give you a share in the rewards of the just, that you may obtain the blessings you wish for, and may what you solicit worthily be fulfilled."

The reader may perhaps be surprised that Francis, who knew brother Elias, and who had learnt by revelation that he was to die out of the Order, should have given him so ample and so detailed a blessing, but we must recollect that He who enlightens the saints, inspires them with views similar to His own. He loves and favours those who are in a state of grace, although He foresees the great sins they will commit hereafter. What affection had He not for David, and what favours did He not heap upon him before he became guilty of the adultery and homicide which rendered him so criminal? Thus, in a similar manner, the holy patriarch, in blessing Elias, only had in consideration the good dispositions in which he believed him to be at that time, independent of the future, which God had revealed to him, and which was not to guide him in this instance. Moreover, Elias was his vicar general, and was so by an

order from on high; he had laboured usefully in the works of the Lord; the talents he possessed put it in his power to do still more good service; we cannot deny that he was sincerely and tenderly attached to his father, and that he had an ardent zeal; all these circumstances united might have induced the saint to give him an ample blessing, nor was it without good effect, since he died in sentiments of sincere repentance.

The man of God finding the day of his death, which Jesus Christ had revealed to him, draw near, said to his brethren in the words of the Prince of the Apostles, "the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand;" (7) and he begged them to have himself taken to the Convent of St. Mary of the Angels, wishing, as St. Bonaventura remarks, to render up the spirit which had given life to him, in the place where he had received the Spirit of grace. He was, therefore, removed, according to his desire, and when he was come to the place between the town and the convent, he asked if they had reached the hospital of the lepers, and as those who were carrying him replied in the affirmative, he said: "Turn me now towards the town, and set me down on the ground." Then raising himself upon the litter, he prayed for Assisi, and for all its inhabitants. He likewise shed tears, in considering the ills which would come upon the city, during the wars which he foresaw, and he then gave it this blessing: "Be blest by the Lord, O city, faithful to God, because many souls will be saved in Thee, and by Thee.

(7) 2 Peter i. 14.

A great number of the servants of the most High, will dwell within Thy walls, and among the number of Thy artizans not a few will be chosen for eternal life."

Some time after his arrival at St. Mary of the Angels, he called for paper and ink, that he might acquaint Dame Jacqueline de Septisal of the proximity of his death ; she was the illustrious Roman widow who was so much attached to him. "It is right," he said, "that dying, I should give that consolation to a person who afforded me so many during my life." This is what he dictated for her ; what follows shows that it was on a Sunday, the twenty-eighth of September.

"To the Lady Jacqueline, the servant of the most High, Brother Francis, the poor little servant of Jesus Christ, sends greetings, and communication with the Holy Ghost, in Jesus Christ.

"Know, my very dear lady, that Jesus Christ, blessed for ever, has done me the favour to reveal to me the end of my life ; it is very near. For which reason, if you wish to see me alive, set out as soon as you shall have received this letter, and hasten to St. Mary of the Angels, for if you arrive later than Saturday you will find me dead. Bring with you some stuff, or rather, a sackcloth, to cover my body, and some wax lights for my funeral. Pray bring also some of those comfits which you made me take when I was sick at Rome."

At these words he stopped, having his eyes raised to heaven, and said it was not necessary to go on with the letter, nor to send a messenger, because the lady had set out, and was bringing

with her all that was required; and, in fact, she arrived shortly after with her two sons and a considerable suite, bringing with her the stuff, a quantity of wax lights, and certain electuaries which were comforting for the stomach.

The religious asked her how she could have come so opportunely, without having had notice given her, and how she came to bring all that was requisite for the time; she told them that during the night she had received an order from heaven, and that an angel had desired her not to leave out any of the things which had been ordered.

There are three things to be noticed in the letter of St. Francis to this lady:—

1st. He begins by these words: "Know, my very dear lady." This marks a spiritual and very holy friendship, which was grounded, and had for its object the love of God alone." St. Paul, writing to Philemon, (8) expresses himself in a similar manner: "To our very dear Sister Appia;" and St. John, after having assured Electa, a lady of distinction, that he loved her in truth, both herself and her children, adds: "Now, Madam, the prayer which I address to you is, that we should love each other."(9) We see in the letters of St. Chrysostom, of St. Jerome, and St. Francis de Sales, the affection with which charity inspired them for Christian virgins, women, and widows. We must not, however, take their example as our authority for making use in general of these expressions, which charity suggested; for all the ministers of Jesus Christ have not the perfection

(8) Philem. ii. (9) 2 John i. and v.

and authority of the apostles, the fathers of the Church, certain holy bishops, and apostolical men; and all their spiritual daughters are not like the great souls, whom these excellent masters lead into the paths of holiness.

2nd. St. Francis gave this lady a last mark of his confidence, and encouraged her pious feelings in applying to her for sackcloth and wax lights; but at the same time he put in practice to the last, those maxims of poverty which were so dear to him, since he did not choose that his body should be covered, nor his obsequies illuminated, but by what he received as alms.

3rd. We do not perhaps understand why this holy man, who was so entirely dead to all the feelings of sense, should have requested the same lady to bring him some of those preparations which he had taken in former illnesses, to strengthen him; but the reason is this; he was aware of the precise day on which he was to die; it was his wish to give instructions to his brethren to the very last moment; he had still much to say to them, and a will to make, which was of no small length; his sufferings often brought on fainting and weakness, which prevented his speaking, and they naturally hastened the approaches of death. All this induced him to adopt all human means which should enable him to fulfil what he knew to be in the order of Providence, not venturing to solicit a miracle for himself. Could he have acted more prudently, or from purer motives?

The porter came to announce the arrival of the

lady, and to enquire whether she should be admitted into the convent, for it had been expressly forbidden by the rule, to permit the entry of any female into any of the houses of his Order, (10) and he had this very strictly enforced at St. Mary of the Angels. But he answered that this lady was not to be included in the law, since her dwelling was always open to the Friars Minors, and it was no more than right to permit her to enter into their convent. She was, therefore, received with her two sons; and she came to throw herself at his feet, as Mary Magdalen is represented at the foot of the cross; she kissed, and bathed with her tears the precious wounds, and she also performed the functions of Martha, rendering to the servant of Jesus Christ all the service in her power. On the Wednesday morning, she proposed to send away her suite, because she thought he would not die so soon; but he prevented her, assuring her that he had only four more days to live: after which, he said, "You will pay me the last respect, and then you may return with your people."

On Friday, the fourth of October, he collected all his brethren together, blessed them a second time, and having blessed a loaf of bread with the sign of the cross, he gave to each a piece as a symbol of union and fraternal charity. They all

(10) Although at that time no positive regulation forbad women to enter the convents, as has been observed, it was nevertheless prohibited by separate regulations which were only dispensed with for valid reasons. The positive law, subsequently made, does not include Sovereigns, Princesses of the Blood Royal, and the Foundresses of Convents. Suarez, De Relig. tom. iv, lib. i. cap. 7. Pelizzar. Manual. Regul. tom. i. lib. iii. cap 6.

partook of it with great devotion, representing to themselves in this repast of love, the last supper which Jesus Christ ate with His disciples. Brother Elias, who wept bitterly, was the only one who did not eat his portion, which was perhaps a mournful foreboding of the division he was to introduce into the Order. In truth he kept the piece he had received from their Father respectfully in his hand; but as if he had cast aside the peace which was offered him to take possession of his heart, instead of at least keeping the morsel of bread, he gave it to Brother Leo, who asked him for it; great care was taken for its preservation, and God permitted that it should be subsequently used for the cure of many maladies.

All the brothers had melted into tears, and the holy patriarch enquired where Bernard, his eldest son, was. And Bernard having drawn near, "Come, my son," he said, "that I may bless you before I die." Feeling that he was kneeling on his left, while Brother Giles was on his right, (11) he put his hands again crosswise, so that his right

(11) Others say that Bernard, being called to receive the blessing, proposed to Brother Elias, out of respect for his dignity as Vicar-General, to place himself on the Father's right hand, and that he went to the left, and that both were kneeling; that then the Saint, who had entirely lost his sight, placing his right hand on the head of Elias, said, "This is not the head of Bernard my eldest son;" and then crossing his hands, his right hand came on the head of Bernard, whom he blessed. This would have been a very natural representation of what the Patriarch Jacob did in regard to Ephraim and Manasses, Genesis xlviii. 14. Wading relates the circumstance in this manner in his edition of the works of S. Francis, published anterior to his Annals of the Order: but he altered this, because he found other narratives more in conformity to the originals which he had afterwards seen; and he takes notice of the change, which shows how correct he endeavoured to be. Wading, Opusc. S. Francis, tom. iii. Bened. 6, et ad ann. 1226, n. 29.

hand came on the head of Bernard, to whom he gave this blessing:

"May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ bless you with all the spiritual blessings which He has shed from on high on His Son. As you were chosen the first to give good example of the evangelical law in this Order, and to imitate the poverty of Jesus Christ, to whom you generously offered your goods and your person in the odour of sweetness, so may you be blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by His poor servant; and may you be so blessed in your going out and coming in, waking or sleeping, living and dying. May he who blesses you be filled with blessings, and may he who curses you not remain unpunished. Be the Lord of your brethren, and let them be all subject to you. Let all those whom you shall approve be admitted into the Order, and all whom you shall reject be rejected. Let no one have authority over you, so that you may be at liberty to go and dwell where you think proper."

Bernard having retired, with his eyes bathed in tears, Francis said to the others: "My intention is, and I direct that whoever may be appointed Minister General, he may love and honour Brother Bernard as myself, and that all the Provincial Ministers, as well as all the brethren of this Order, may look upon him as they have done on me; in fact, I leave him to you as the half of my soul. There are few who are able to appreciate his virtue, it is so great, that Satan never ceases from tempting him, molesting him, and laying snares for him. But by God's help he will get the better

of all, to the great profit of his soul, and he will find himself in an extraordinary manner in perfect tranquillity." Those who were present, and who afterwards lived with Bernard, witnessed the fulfilment of these predictions. His eminent sanctity, well known to Francis, and of which he foresaw the perseverance, was the reason why he ordered the others to respect him as their master, and why he rendered him independent, in order that he might have full leisure to give himself up to contemplation, which had such charms for him. For a similar reason, he gave him power to admit or reject novices, as his prudence should dictate; a privilege which was the more appropriate, as Bernard had been the first to enter into the Order.

St. Bonaventura is silent as to the manner and fervour with which the servant of God received the last Sacraments, (12) following in that the method of many old authors, who in the lives of saints

(12) Saint Athanasius, in the Life of Saint Anthony, does not mention his having received the Sacraments at his death: nor Saint Possidius in his Life of Saint Augustin; nor Sulpicius Severus in the Life of Saint Martin. There can be no doubt that these great Saints did receive them not only because of their great piety, but because it was the custom of the Church. We see this in the Life of S. Ambrose in which Paulinus, his secretary, states, n. 47, that the Body of our Blessed Saviour was given him by Honoratus, Bishop of Vercelli, and that he died with this excellent Viaticum. A writer of the Life of S. Bernard does not say that he received the Viaticum and Extreme Unction; but another writer of the same Life expressly notices that he did receive them; and both these authors were his contemporaries. The author of the Life of Saint Bernard, published in 1704 by J. de Nully, ought to have mentioned this circumstance, with many others which he has omitted, and not have finished drily by saying, "God decided his fate, and he expired." Thus the silence of some authors, must not prevent us from believing that the Saints put in practice at their deaths what was the uniform custom of the faithful.

only notice those things which are peculiar and marvellous, without speaking of the common and ordinary actions of all Christians. But we have only to bear in mind the great respect St. Francis had for all the practices of the Church, the spirit of penance by which he was animated, the vivid and tender affections of his heart towards the Passion of the Son of God, and the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, the ardour of his zeal to cause Jesus Christ to be adored in the august Sacrament, and revered in all that related to it; his eagerness in recommending the frequent approach to the holy communion, and the constant recourse he himself had to this balm for the soul, so as, for fear of being deprived of it, choosing to have mass said in his own room during his illnesses; all these recollections, being united, are demonstrations of what must have been the dispositions of the saint when the last sacraments were administered to him.

He particularly desired all his brethren to have a peculiar veneration for the church of St. Mary of the Angels, because it had been revealed that the Blessed Virgin had a singular affection for this church among all those which were dedicated to her name, and upon this subject he spoke as follows with great animation:—

"It is my desire that this place shall be always under the direction of the person who shall be Minister-General, and servitor of the order; and that the minister shall be careful to select for its service only good and holy brethren; and that the clerks who shall be appointed to it shall be taken from those of the order who are the best and the

holiest, and are the best instructed for the celebration of the divine offices, so that their brethren and the seculars may be edified in seeing and hearing them. Let them also be particular in choosing the lay brethren to be placed there; let them be discreet, mild, and humble men, whose lives are holy, who shall serve the others without entering into idle discourse, not talk of the news, or what is passing in the world, nor of any thing which does not relate to the salvation of souls. It is also my desire that none of the brethren shall come here except the Minister-General and his companions, and that no secular shall be admitted, in order that those belonging to the place may the better preserve themselves in purity and holiness, and that the place itself may remain pure and holy, being solely devoted to singing the praises of the Lord. When God shall be pleased to call any one of them to Himself, I desire that the Minister-General may send another whose life shall be equally holy. My intention is, that if the brethren shall swerve from the path of perfection, this place shall be ever blest, and shall remain as the example and model for the whole order; as a sort of candlestick (13) before the

(13) We see clearly that he had in view here the golden Candlestick with seven branches, which Moses placed in the Tabernacle, in the spot called The Sanctuary: and that which the prophet Zacharias saw, as well as those which were seen by Saint John, as stated in the Apocalypse. He made the application in a moral sense to his brethren, who, as ardent luminaries, were to offer to God, in the church of Saint Mary of the Angels, fervent prayers which would be favourably received. He had a right to make this application, since, in the Apocalypse, a whole society, an entire Church is designated under the figure of a Candlestick. Exod. xxv. 34 Zachar. iv. 2. Apoc. i. 12.

throne of God, and before the altar of the blessed Virgin, where lamps shall be ever burning, to obtain from the goodness of God that He may grant His pardon to the brethren for all their faults, and preserve and protect this order which He has planted with His own hand.

"My children," he continued, "be careful never to abandon this spot, and if you are driven on one side return by the opposite one, for it is holy, it is the dwelling-place of Jesus Christ, and of the Blessed Virgin, His mother. It is here that the Lord, the most High, has multiplied our numbers, from being very few; here, by the light of His wisdom, He enlightened the minds of His poor ones; here, by the ardour of His love, he inflamed our hearts; here, whoever shall pray devoutly will obtain (14) whatever he may ask, and whoever shall sin here will be punished with greater rigour. Wherefore, my children, have a great veneration for this place, which is truly the dwelling of the Almighty, is peculiarly beloved by Jesus Christ and His blessed Mother. Employ yourselves here joyfully, and with your whole hearts, in praising and blessing God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in unity with the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The day at length arrived which had been fixed by Divine Providence for terminating and rewarding the labours of this faithful servant of God; it

(14) He seems to allude here to the entire remission of sins by the indulgence of the Portiuncula, for those who, being well disposed, shall pray in the Church of S. Mary of the Angels, according to the concession made by Jesus Christ and by His Vicar.

was a Saturday, the fourth of October. St. Bonaventura, who considers him on his death-bed as a work well finished by the chisel of suffering, as a precious jewel cut and polished, to be placed in the sacred edifice of the celestial Jerusalem, remarks, that finding himself near his end, and animating himself with fresh fervour, he stretched himself naked on the ground. "It was," says the holy doctor, "sensibly to manifest that he had nothing in common with the world, in these last moments of his life, in which the devil might still attack him;" which is what St. Gregory recommends when he says, "That it is necessary to be naked to wrestle with adversaries who are naked, because they have no property in the world."(15) Thus Francis, stretched on the ground without even the penitential sackcloth, his eyes, as usual, raised to heaven, and thinking solely on the glory which awaited him, covered with his left hand the wound which was on his right side, to prevent its being seen, and he then said to his brethren: "I have done all that relates to myself, I entreat Jesus Christ to instruct you as to what you are to do."

All the brethren were penetrated with grief and shed tears. One of them, whom the holy man called his guardian, knowing by inspiration what he wished for, went quickly to fetch a tunic, a cord, and the other parts of the dress of a Friar Minor, and brought them to him, saying: "Here is what we lend you, as to a poor man, take them out of obedience." He accepted this alms, and

(15) S. Greg. Hom. 32, in Evang.

was rejoiced that he was faithful to the last to poverty, which he called his dame, and his mistress, then raising his hands to heaven he gave glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, that, being disengaged and free from everything, he was about to go to Him.

At the beginning of his conversion he stripped himself before the Bishop of Assisi, in imitation of the poor life of our Saviour; and to resemble Him more completely in His state of poverty, of nudity, and of suffering on the cross, he stripped himself before his brethren at his death, and chose to leave this world naked as he came into it, or, at least, only in a habit which he had received as an alms, such was his love of poverty. His zeal went even further; he ordered his brethren, by the obedience of charity, to stretch him naked on the ground as soon as he should be dead, and to leave him in that state during the space of time that it would take to walk a mile slowly. This was a further imitation of the Saviour, who, after His death, remained some time on the cross before He was taken down to be buried.

"Oh!" exclaims St. Bonaventura, "with what truth may it be said that this was verily a Christian man, who has rendered himself perfectly conformable to Jesus Christ while living, or dying, or dead, and who has merited the honour of such a conformity, by the impression of the five wounds!"

What is further remarkable is, that they asked him where he desired to be buried, to which he answered: "In the vilest of places, on the Infernal hill, on that side were criminals are executed."

(16) This place was out of the town of Assisi, near the walls, vulgarly called the Infernal hill, perhaps on account of its being the place of execution. The servant of God wished to be buried there, in order to be in strict conformity with his Divine Master, "who chose," says St. Jerome, "to be crucified in the (17) usual place of execution, as a criminal among criminals, for the salvation of men, and to be placed in a tomb which was close by." His wish became a prophecy, for two years after his death, as will be explained hereafter, a church was built in his honour on the Infernal Hill, when the name was changed into that of the Hill of Paradise, and the site of the church was so contrived that his body was placed precisely on the spot where the gallows had been formerly erected. (18)

Seeing his last hour drawing nigh, he summoned all his brethren who were in the convent, and after having addressed some words of consolation to them, to mitigate the grief they felt for his death, he exhorted them to love God as a tender Father. Then he spoke to them for a long time on the care they should take to persevere in the faith of the Church of Rome, in poverty and in patience, under the tribulations which awaited them, as well as in adherence to their holy undertaking. He made use of the most moving expressions in recommending to them to make progress towards eternal goods, to be armed with vigilance

(16) Wading, ad ann. 1228, n. 79.

(17) S. Hieron. in cap. 27, Math. v. 33.

(18) Wading, ad ann. 1235. n. 19.

against the dangers of the world, and to walk exactly in the paths of Jesus Christ, remarking to them that the observance of His Gospel was the basis and essence of their institution, and that all their practices had that in view.

Up to this time we had to admire the presence of mind, and the strength which the saint manifested in the midst of his sufferings, and of the weaknesses which were hastening on his last moments. But there is much more room for astonishment when we find, that after all the exertion we have witnessed, he was still able to dictate a tolerably long will full of luminousness, of feeling, and of vigour. We must think that the Man-God, who spoke to the last moment so distinctly from the cross, with a tranquillity and grandeur, which marked His divinity, had communicated some portion of His strength to His creature Francis, to have rendered him capable of an effort almost supernatural. We deem it desirable to give in this place his last will, such as he dictated it to brother Angelo, one of his companions. It is wholly spiritual, because the sainted patriarch left to his children only spiritual goods, these were, as St. Bonaventura observes, poverty and peace.

THE LAST WILL OF SAINT FRANCIS.

"The Lord has given me grace, to me brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance. When I was in the state of sin, (19) it seemed to me to be

(19) Although he had never lived a disorderly life, he nevertheless called the first years of his life a state of sin, because he then loved vanity and pleasure, and because this love is a sin which leads to the commission of others. "Love not the world, nor the things that are of the world," says

very bitter to see lepers, but the Lord having Himself taken me amongst them, I was merciful in their regard, and in leaving them I felt that what had appeared to me so bitter, had been changed into deliciousness for my soul and body.

"After that I tarried little in the world, I left it, and our Lord gave me so much faith in the Church, where He is, that I adored Him in it, in saying simply: 'We adore Thee, O most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all Thy Churches which are on earth, and we bless Thee for having redeemed the world by Thy holy Cross.'

"He likewise gave me, and He still gives me, so much faith in priests, who live according to the forms of the holy Roman Church, because of their character, that if they were to persecute me it would be still to them that I should have recourse; and had I as much wisdom as Solomon had, were I to find priests poor according to the world, I would not, contrary to their wish, preach in the churches in which they dwell. I mean to fear them, to love them, to honour them, and all others as my masters. What induces me to do this is, that I see nothing in this world so discerning of this same Son of God, the Most High, as His very sacred body, and His most holy blood, which they receive, and which they alone administer to others.

"Now, it is my desire that these most holy mysteries may be honoured and revered above all other things, and that they may be put in places

the Apostle S. John," (1 John, ii. 15,) and in Baptism we renounce the pomps of Satan, that is, the maxims and vanities of the world.

where they may be carefully preserved. Wherever I shall find the very holy names, and the very holy words of the Son of God, in improper places, (20) I wish that they should be removed, and I beg that they may be taken away, and placed in some more proper locality. We must also respect all theologians, and all those who dispense to us the very holy word of God, as ministers who communicate to us spirit and life.

"When the Lord had committed to me the guidance of the brethren, no one taught me what I ought to do; but the most High Himself revealed to me, that I was to live according to the formula of the Gospel. (21) I caused it to be written out in few and plain words, and our holy father, the Pope, confirmed it.

"Those who came to me, to engage in this mode of life, gave to the poor all that they had. They were satisfied with our tunic, (22) covered with pieces inside and outside, if they chose, (23)

(20) He spoke as if he was not on the point of death, in order to make the greater impression on his brethren respecting the veneration to be shown to holy things.

(21) His testimony leaves no doubt, but that the Rule of the Friars Minors was revealed by God.

(22) With the Tunic must be included the Cowl. The Rule permitted them to have a second Tunic without a Cowl; but many went without it out of mortification.

(23) They added patches to the Tunic, from a spirit of poverty, and to make them last the longer, and have fewer new ones. It was also in opposition to the foolish vanity of the age, and to become more agreeable to God, by rendering themselves more vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, according to this view of Saint Bonaventura: "Ut seculi stultitia in fratrum habitu ostendatur. Qui se stultum et despicabilem exhibet huic mundo, ipsi Deo efficitur pretiosus. Expos. in Reg. Frat. Min. cap. 2.

with a cord for a girdle, and a pair of drawers ; and we desired nothing more. We, who are clerks, said the office as other clerks do ; the lay brothers said the Pater Noster. We willingly took up our abode in poor and abandoned churches, we were simple-minded persons, and were submissive to all the world.

"I worked with my own hands, and I will still work, (24) and it is my fixed desire (25) that all the other brethren shall apply themselves to some useful labour ; let those who know not how to work, learn to do so, not from any wish to gain, by what they may do, but for good example, and to fly idleness. If we are not rewarded for our work, let us have recourse to the table (26) of the

(24) By this he showed his love for labour, although he knew that the time for his death was approaching, in order that he might thereby induce his brethren to fly idleness.

(25) Pope Gregory IX. who had been the intimate friend of Saint Francis, and who was perfectly acquainted with his intention, declared in the year 1230, four years after the Saint's death, that his will did not impose any new obligations on his brethren, which was confirmed by Pope Nicholas III. in 1279. The article therefore relative to manual labour must be referred to the fifth chapter of the Rule ; on which Nicholas III. has said : "We declare that on a due consideration of the words of Saint Francis, it does not appear to have been his intention to subject to manual labour those who are employed in study, or in the service, and on the Divine ministries ; since we see in the example of Jesus Christ, and of many of the holy Fathers, that the labour of the mind is to be preferred to that of the body ; and the more so as what concerns the soul, is of greater importance than corporal affairs. But this part of the Rule must be understood to relate to those who are not employed in such spiritual exercises, in order that they may not live in idleness ; unless when they are legitimately employed in the service of the other brethren, or elevated in so high a degree of prayer and contemplation, that it would not be right to take them from it to employ them on manual labour." Décree, Exiit qui seminat in 6, de verb. signif. This declaration of Gregory IX., given by Wading is taken from the Registry of the Vatican, n. 73.

(26) He calls the goods of the rich the table of the Lord, because they have received them from Him in order to assist the poor therewith, and

Lord, seeking alms from door to door. He revealed to me that we should make use of this mode of salutation: 'May the Lord give you His peace.'

"Let the brethren be very careful not to receive on any account, either churches, or houses, or anything which may be built for them, if it be not in conformity with holy poverty, which we have promised to abide by in the Rule; and let them always live there as strangers and travellers. I strictly forbid under obedience, all the brethren, whoever they may be, to have the daring to solicit (27) any letter from the court of Rome, either

because Jesus Christ receives in the person of the poor, what is given by the rich. These are two truths of Religion, taken from the Gospel, and often dwelt upon by the Fathers, and which cannot be too much meditated on by those who are possessed of this world's goods.

(27) He did not by this forbid praying for the Apostolical letters requisite for the support and government of his Order, which is immediately dependent on the Holy See, since he himself had frequently solicited such. He only speaks of such as might be prayed for from views contrary to the spirit of holy poverty, humility, and the patience with which he required his brethren to love and labour for the salvation of souls. The body of the Order has never solicited favours of this nature. See Pet. Marchant. Fundam duod. In Coron. tot. Oper. pag. 183 et seq.

Some Friars Minors with some Friars Preachers, who had been selected by Pope Honorius to go on a mission into the Kingdom of the Miramolin, they represented to His Holiness that to succeed among these Infidels, to penetrate into the prisons where the Christians were confined, and administer the Sacraments to them, it would be sometimes necessary for them to wear secular dresses, to let their beards and hair grow, and even sometimes to receive money to have wherewithal to live. The Pope granted them these permissions, deeming it a case which required these dispensations; this is very like what is practised at the present moment in England; without which the Catholics there would be deprived of all spiritual aid. M. Fleury, who notices this, should have added that in this the Friars Minors do nothing which is contrary to the spirit of their Rule, because the evident necessity of the case and the salvation of souls, must be preferred to a clause in the Rule. The Bull of Pope Honorius is dated 17th March, 1226. Raynald. ad ann. 1226, n. 60. The permission which these Friars Minors requested from the Pope to be allowed to let

by themselves, or through the medium of any other person, either for a church, or for any other place, on pretence of preaching, or even for the safety of their persons in case of persecution. But should they not be received in one place, let them fly to another, there to do penance with the blessing of God.

"I will implicitly obey the Minister-General (28) of this Confraternity, (29) and the Guardian, whom it may please him to give me; and I consent to be so bound in his hands that it will not be in my power to go, nor to do anything against his will, because he is my master. Although I am simple and infirm, it is my desire (30) always to have a clerk to say the Office to me, as the Rule directs. If there should be some who do not say the Office, according to the Rule, or who should wish to make any alteration in it, or should not be Catholics; let all the brethren, wherever they may

their beards grow, shows clearly that they did not wear them at the beginning of the Order. Wading gives other proofs of this; and the continuators of Bollandus, Act. SS. Vit. S. Anthon. 13, Jun. p. 714, and p. 741, confirm it, by giving the ancient portraits of the Blessed Benedict of Arezzo, and of St. Anthony of Padua, neither of which have beards. They say that the Friars Minors who were priests, did not wear their beards to conform to the custom of the Clergy of the 13th century; and that it appears that Saint Francis, who was only in Deacon's orders, did not shave out of humility; but we shall see in the description of his person, taken from his historians, that he had very little beard.

(28) He had lived, and he died with a sincere desire to obey, although he was the Founder of the Order, and that two Popes had appointed him its Minister General.

(29) We have not chosen to change this term of confraternity which he makes use of to show the fraternal union which should exist among the Religious of his Order.

(30) He speaks thus to inspire his brethren with zeal for saying the Divine Office, even in their illnesses.

be, (and should such an one be there) be compelled by obedience to take him to the custos, (31) the nearest to the place at which they may be; and let the custos be obliged by obedience to guard him night and day, as a prisoner, so that no one may be able to rescue him, until he delivers him up to his minister; (32) and let this minister be strictly bound by obedience to have him taken by brethren who are able to keep him safe, day and night, (33) as prisoner, until he is delivered up to the Cardinal of Ostia, who is the protector and censor of this confraternity.

"Let not the brethren say that this is another Rule; it is a memorial, a warning, an exhortation, and my last will, which I, Brother Francis, your very little servant, address to you, my brethren, who are blest by God, in order that we may the better observe in a more Catholic (34) manner the Rule, which we have promised the Lord to obey. Let the minister-general, and all other ministers

(31) Wading says that the Custos means Provincial, as has been remarked elsewhere. We might also think that it has the meaning of Guardian, for the term Custos in the commencement of the Order was generally for all Superiors. See Marchant, Expos. in cap. viii. Reg.

(32) Wading supposes this to be the Minister General, but it is more probable that it is the Provincial Minister.

(33) We here remark the zeal of Saint Francis for the preservation of the purity of faith in his Order. He infuses similar dispositions by his spirit. The Friars Minors would not suffer any one of their Order to swerve with impunity from the Orthodox doctrine. They are ardent Catholics, born and open enemies to all novelties.

(34) He makes use of the term Catholicé, to show that, as unity of mind is the reason why the Faithful are called Catholics all over the world; so also the Friars Minors must observe their Rule in a Catholic manner, that is to say, in a similar spirit, and in a similar manner, without any peculiar opinion which should occasion schism, or division.

and custodes, (35) be bound by obedience not to add anything (36) to these words, nor to suppress anything which is in it. Let them always have with them this writing, joined to the Rule, and in all the chapters which they may convene, when they read the rule, let them also read these words.

"I likewise strictly forbid, under the law of obedience, all my brethren, whether clerks or laics, from making any comments (37) on the

(35) Ministers and Custodes ; that is to say, according to Saint Bonaventura, as has been observed, the Ministers who are Custodes, so appointed to have a care, to guard. One might say that Custodes in this place signify guardians.

(36) He forbad making any alteration in his will because he made it only in order that they should follow up the Rule with greater precision, that Rule of which God was the Author, who would that it should be literally observed. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses forbids them to add or take from any of his words. In the Apocalypse Saint John makes use of severe threats against those who should add, or take from the prophecies of that Book. Deuter. cap. iv. et xii. Apocalyp. cap. xxii.

(37) We must not be surprised that Saint Francis forbad making any comments (glosses) on his Rule, since Jesus Christ had declared that it was to be literally kept without comment. Pope Nicholas III., in his decretal, Exiit qui seminat, being a declaration as to the Rule of the Friars Minors, forbids under pain of excommunication, latæ sententiæ, to make comments even on this decretal, unless to make the explanation clearer, or more grammatical; or for the more clear understanding the text, or the construction of certain words, without altering the sense in any manner, nor twist it to give it any other than what it literally bears. If the decretal, which is declaratory of the Rule, is not to be commented on, this must apply more forcibly to the Rule itself. It is therefore only permitted to explain it, simply literally, in the proper and express sense of the words, according to the intention of the holy Founder, as Saint Bonaventura and others have done. For the same reason those parts of the will which relate to the Rule, are not to have any comments made on them ; and as to the other parts, there is no Friar Minor who must not conform to them as much as possible, in order to comply with the views of his blessed Father. Moreover, it is the old practice of the Order to read in all the communities on every Friday of the year the Rule and the Will, not only to obey the holy Founder who recommended the reading of these two documents, but to impress frequently upon the members the duties of their profession.

Rule, and on this writing, saying: 'It is thus that it should be understood.' But as the Lord has done me the favour to dictate it to me, purely and simply, let it be similarly understood, purely, simply, and without comment, and put the same in practice to the end, by holy actions.

"Whosoever shall observe these things may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the celestial Father, the most High, and on earth with the blessing of His well-beloved Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, with the assistance of all the celestial virtues, and of all the saints: and I, Brother Francis, your very little servant in our Lord, I confirm to you (38) as much as in my power this very holy blessing, within and without, Amen."

Such were the last dispositions of St. Francis, which he called his last will. A similar name is given in ecclesiastical history, (39) to the instructions which were given by St. Ephraim on his death-bed; and this name may be properly given to the exhortations addressed by the saints to their disciples in parting from them. They followed the examples of the patriarchs, (40) of Tobias, and of Mathathias; but principally that of the Son of

(38) He had been empowered by God to confirm this solemn blessing: this is wonderful; but is it not still more so that Jesus Christ should have said to Saint Peter in establishing him His Vicar and visible Head of His Church: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." Math. xvi. 19. See S. Gregory Dial. lib. ii. cap. xxiii.

(39) Int. Oper. S. Ephrem.

(40) Genes. cap. ix. 27, 48 and 49. Tob. cap. iv. and xiv.; 1 Mach. cap. ii. John cap. xiii., xiv. and xix.

God, who before His Passion addressed to His Apostles a discourse full of the tenderest sentiments, His testament of charity, which he finished on the cross, in favour of His blessed mother, and of the disciple whom He loved. As all Christians are bound faithfully to fulfil what Jesus Christ has pointed out to them before quitting the world, it is also requisite that the children of the founders of orders, who were animated by His Spirit, should be faithful in practising what their fathers have said to them when dying. This is what an ancient author has beautifully expressed in relation to the last will of St. Francis. "O testament of peace, O testament never to be forgotten, which must be in every way respected, in opposition to which no innovation must be admitted; will most valid, not by the death of the testator, but by the immortal glory he has received. Happy those who do not despise this incorruptible testament of charity, this fertile basis of humility, this inestimable treasure of poverty, which has been bequeathed by so great and so illustrious a father." (41)

After the holy man had made known his last wishes, he sent for Brother Leo, his confessor, and for Brother Angelo, whom he directed to sing in his presence the canticle of the sun, because death was very near; this is the canticle of which we have spoken, in which he gives glory to God for all his creatures, and also for death. As he was assured by revelation that death would remove

(41) Ad Calc. Test. inter Oper. S. Fran c.

him to eternal life, its proximity filled him with joy, which he evidenced by causing the praises of God to be sung.

When the canticle was finished he placed his arms one over the other in the form of a cross, a saving sign to which he had been always devoted as St. Bonaventura remarks, and stretching them over his brethren, who stood around him, he gave his blessing for the last time, as well to those who were present, as to those who were absent, in the name, and by virtue of Jesus crucified. He then pronounced the following words with great mildness and suavity: "Adieu, my children, I bid you all adieu; I leave you in the fear of the Lord, abide ever in that. The time of trial and tribulation approaches; happy those who persevere in the good they have begun. (42) As to me, I go to God with great eagerness, and I recommend you all to His favour."

He then called for the book of the Gospels, and requested them to read to him the Gospel of St. John, at that part where the history of the Passion of our Blessed Saviour begins by these words: "Ante diem festum Paschæ;" before the feast of the Passover. After this had been read he began himself to recite as well as he could the hundred and forty-first psalm, "Voce meâ ad Dominum clamavi;" I have cried to Thee, O Lord, with my voice; and he continued it to the last verse, "Me expectant justi, donec retribuas mihi." The just wait for me, until Thou reward me. In fine, all the mysteries of grace having been fulfilled in this

(42) Act. xx. 32.

man, so beloved by God, his very holy soul, absorbed in divine love, was released from the shackles of his body, and went to repose in the Lord. It was on a Saturday, in the evening, on the fourth day of October, in the forty-fifth year of his age, the twentieth of his conversion, the eighteenth of the institution of his order, and the beginning of the third since he had received the Stigmata.

Such a death makes good what the holy fathers of the Church say, (43) that the perfect Christian dies with joy, and with pleasure. There is no one who would not wish for such a death. The most worldly would desire with Balaam, that their life should end as that of the just; but the perfection of the just must be imitated to afford any hope of the end being similar; death is only mild and consoling in proportion to the fervour of a Christian life.

St. Bonaventura places on record many proofs which they had of the glory of St. Francis at the moment of his death. One (44) of his disciples saw his blessed soul under the figure of a brilliant star, rise upon a white cloud, above all the others, and go straight to heaven. This marked, says the holy doctor, the splendour of his sublime sanctity. With the plenitude of grace and wisdom, which had rendered him worthy of entering into the

(43) S. Aug. in Epist. Joan. tract 9, n. 2. S. Greg. Homil. 15, in Evang. n. 3. S. Bernard. serm. ii. in Fest. Sanct. Apost. n. 6. Num. xxiii. 10.

(44) Saint Bonaventura does not name him; but others assure us that it was Brother James of Lodi, who is buried at Saint Mary of the Angels, and whom God has honoured by many miracles. Wading, ad ann. 1226. n. 38.

regions of light and peace, where, with Jesus Christ, he enjoys a repose which will be eternal.

Brother Austin, of Assisi, Provincial of the Terra di Lavoro, a just and saintly man, who was in the last stage of a severe illness, and had ceased to speak, suddenly exclaimed: "Wait for me, my father, wait for me; I will go with you." The brethren, quite astonished, asked him who he was speaking to? "What," said he, "don't you see our father Francis, going up to heaven?" At that very moment his soul separated itself from his body, and followed that of his father. Thomas of Celano, and Bernard of Bessa, the companions of St. Bonaventura, also mention that a holy man of their day, had a revelation to the effect that the souls of several Friars Minors were delivered from the sufferings of purgatory, and were joined with that of the holy patriarch, to enter heaven with him.

The Bishop of Assisi being then on a devotional tour to Mount Gargano, to visit the church of the Archangel Michael, Francis appeared to him on the night of his death, and said: "I leave the world, and am going up to heaven." The prelate, in the morning, mentioned to those who accompanied him, what he had seen; and on his return, having made exact enquiry, he found that the apparition had appeared to him at the very time of the saint's death.

His body was placed naked on the ground, and was left there some time, as he had desired. It was afterwards washed, (45) and covered with

(45) Two authors say that he was opened, and that his heart and

the tunic which Dame Jacqueline of Septisal had brought from Rome. This illustrious and pious widow had then the consolation to view at leisure, and to kiss the wounds which had been imprinted on the holy man, and which she so greatly revered. She was animated with such fervour, that after having defrayed the expense of a magnificent funeral for him, she went back to Rome, put her affairs in order, renounced the world entirely, and then returned to Assisi, where she passed (46) the remainder of her life in watching and prayer, at the tomb of her spiritual father.

The body of St. Francis, after his death, was an object worthy of admiration, according to this description of it, given by St. Bonaventura, on the testimony of those who had seen it, and reported verbally to him all the circumstances, conformably to what had been taken down in writing. On his hands and on his feet black nails were seen as of iron, wonderfully formed of his flesh by

bowels were deposited in the church of Saint Mary of the Angels, in order to have at least a portion of his relics there ; and they ground this on the Saint having said that his heart would remain in the convent of Saint Mary of the Angels, when he designated the Infernal Hill as the place for his grave, the spot where criminals were executed. This is what is asserted by the Religious of this Convent at the present time. Wading is not convinced of the accuracy of this, and many others reject it altogether, believing that respect prevented them from opening his body; which seems to be probable and is corroborated in Assisi by a tradition, gathered from the testimony of some persons who were so fortunate as to have seen and touched the body. If he said that his heart would continue at Saint Mary of the Angels, it may be understood of the peculiar affection he always entertianed for that place. Wading ad ann. 1226 n. 40.

(46) She died in the year 1239, and was buried at Assisi in the Church which had been built in honour of St. Francis. Her two sons who were Roman Senators were likewise buried there. Wading, ad ann. 1235, n. 24, and ad ann. 1239, n. 14.

divine power, and so attached to his flesh, that when they were pressed on one side they protruded farther on the other, as hard excrescences, and all of one piece. Nothing now prevented the wound on his side from being seen, which he hid with so much care during his lifetime; this wound, and which had not been made by the hand of man, which resembled the opening in the side of our blessed Saviour, from which the Sacrament of our Redemption issued, (47) and that of our regeneration. Its colour was red, and the edges rounded off, gave it the appearance of a beautiful rose. The flesh of the saint, which was naturally of a brownish colour, and which his diseases had rendered tawny, became extraordinarily white. It called to mind the robes whitened in the blood of the Lamb, (48) with which the saints are clothed. His limbs were flexible and pliable as those of an infant, evident signs of the innocence and candour of his soul. The whiteness of his skin contrasted

(47) The Holy Fathers say that the Water which issued from the side of Jesus Christ, represented Baptism, which is the Sacrament of our spiritual regeneration, and that the Blood represented the Eucharist, the Sacrament which contains the price of our Redemption, the Body and Blood of our Saviour which nourishes us spiritually for the support of the Life which we received in Baptism. Now, as Baptism is the first of the Sacraments, and the Eucharist is the greatest of them all, the same Saints teach us that the Sacraments of the Church came forth from the side of Jesus Christ, and from that came forth the Church His Spouse after His death, as Eve was taken from the side of Adam during his sleep. On which S. Augustine exclaims: "O death which revives the dead!" What is there which is more pure than this Blood? What is there more salutary than this wound? S. Augus. in Joan. tract. 120. And S. Chrysostom says: "Every time you draw near to receive this Divine beverage, figure to yourselves that it flows from the side of Jesus Christ to your mouth.

(48) Apoc. vii. 13 and 14

with the black nails of his hands and feet, and with the wound in his side, which resembled a fresh blossomed rose, exhibited a variety of colour which was beautiful and pleasing, and was the admiration of those who saw it. His body, in fine, was the representation of the Passion of Jesus Christ by the wounds imprinted on it, and of the glorious resurrection, by the qualifications it had received.

This marvellous and novel sight mitigated the affliction of his children; it strengthened their faith, inflamed their love, and quite enraptured them; and although the death of so amiable a father caused them to shed torrents of tears, they, nevertheless, had their hearts filled with joy when they kissed the impressions of the wounds of the great King imprinted on his flesh.

As soon as the news of his death was spread, and the circumstance of the Stigmata came to be spoken of, the people came in crowds to see them; each person wished to see them with his own eyes, and assure himself of the truth of an event which was the cause of so much joy to the public. A great number of the citizens of Assisi were permitted to approach, to see and to kiss the sacred Stigmata. One of them named Jerome, belonging to the army, a learned and prudent man, whose reputation was very extensive, finding it difficult to give credit to so wonderful a circumstance, examined the wounds more particularly and more minutely than the rest, in presence of the brethren, and of many persons of the town. He felt the feet, the hands, and the wound in the

side of the saint's body ; he moved the nails, and convinced himself so perfectly of the truth of the fact, that he was afterwards a most zealous advocate and witness to it, and made oath to its truth on the holy Evangelists. "It was," St. Bonaventura remarks, "a case similar to that of the apostle St. Thomas, (49) who, from being incredulous, became a faithful witness after having put his hands into the wounds of the Saviour, in order that his faith, preceded by incredulity, should strengthen our faith, and prevent us from becoming incredulous.

The brethren, who had been present at the death of the blessed patriarch, passed the remainder of the night in singing the praises of God around the body, with a number of other persons, who had collected there for the purpose, insomuch that it was more resembling a feast of celestial spirits than the funeral service of a mortal.

The next morning, which was Sunday, the holy corpse was carried to Assisi, on the shoulders of the principal persons of that city, and those of the highest rank among the Friars Minors; hymns and canticles being sung the whole way, while the concourse followed, carrying in their hands lighted torches, or branches of laurel. The procession passed on to the church of St. Damian, where Clare and her nuns awaited it, and where it halted for a short time, to afford them the consolation of seeing and kissing the Stigmata. In admiring this extraordinary prodigy, and lamenting the

(49) John xx. 27.

death of such a father, they called to mind the promise he had made them during his last illness, that they should again see him before their death. Clare endeavoured to draw the nail from one of his hands, which, as the head of it was raised above the palm of the hand, she thought she would be able to effect, but she found it impossible. She, therefore, only dipped a piece of linen in the blood which exuded; and she took the measure of the body, by which she had a niche made of similar size, on the side of the tribune which the religious occupied, in which the image of the saint was afterwards placed. These pious virgins would have been glad to have detained the body longer, but it was necessary to resume the route to Assisi, where he was buried in the church of St. George, with every possible veneration and respect. It was there he had received the first rudiments of education, it was there he had preached for the first time, and there was his first place of repose.

Brother Elias, in his quality of Vicar-general, wrote a circular letter on his death, which he sent into all the provinces of the order. The copy (50)

(50) This letter was in original in the archives of the convent of Friars (Recollets) at Valenciennes in the last century; and a copy of it was sent to Wading which he inserted in the Annals of the Order. Father William Spoelberch, a Friar Minor of the province of Lower Germany, author of the new edition of a book entitled: "Speculum B. Francisci et sociorum ejus," printed at Antwerp in 1620 by Gerard Wolschatius, has said in Part ii. p. 102, that the same letter was preserved in the same place, as an ancient and precious document. But it is no longer there; perhaps it was removed when the town passed under a new domination after the war, and the Religious of the country removed to some other place; but there remains in the convent of Valenciennes a copy similar to the one

which the provincial of France received, was thus directed: "To my well-beloved brother in Jesus Christ, brother Gregory, minister of the brethren who are in France, and to all his brethren, and to ours, brother Elias sends greeting."

He first expresses his grief in very affecting terms, and in alluding to the loss the order had sustained, he passes a high eulogium on the sanctity of their common father, with many citations from the Sacred Scriptures very aptly applied. Then, he says, that what must console the children of the blessed patriarch is, that his death opened to him eternal life, and that previously he had pardoned all the offences which he might have sustained from any of them. This article only regarded brother Elias and his adherents, for they were the only ones who had caused him any displeasure, and, according to all probability, Elias only adverted to it to soften the feelings of many who were irritated with him in consequence of his relaxation. After this preliminary he communicates to them a great cause for rejoicing in the miracle of the Stigmata, which he treats as follows: "We had seen our brother and our Father Francis some time before his death as one crucified, having on his body five wounds similar to those of Jesus Christ, nails of the colour of nails of iron, which perforated his hands and feet, his side being laid open as by the wound of a lance, from whence blood often percolated. Immediately

which Wading published; and from the copy another was sent to the Recollets at Paris, which has been collated on the spot by Gildard du Flos, Apostolic Notary.

after his death his face, which was not handsome during his life, became extraordinarily beautiful, white and brilliant, and pleasing to behold ; his limbs, which the contraction of the muscles caused by his great sufferings, had stiffened like to those of a corpse, became pliant and flexible as those of a child, they could be handled and placed in any position which might be wished."

He then exhorts them to give glory to God for so great a miracle, and adds, "He who used to console us in our afflictions is no more, he has been taken from us ; we are now orphans, and have no longer a father. But since it is written, "that to the Lord is the poor man left, He will be a helper to the orphan ;(51) let us address our prayers to Him, my dear brethren, and let us entreat Him to give us another chief, who, as a true Machabee, shall guide us and lead us to battle." The sequel showed that Elias wished to be himself the Machabee, the head of his brethren. At the close of the letter he ordered prayers for the deceased, saying : "It is not useless to pray for the dead ; pray for him, as he requested we should : but at the same time pray that we may obtain from God a participation in His grace. Amen." It was signed Brother Elias, a sinner.

Although he had no doubt but that the holy man was in glory, he, nevertheless, did not omit praying for him, not only to comply with the wish of the deceased, and not to forestall the decision of the Holy See, but also because he bore in mind

(51) Psalm ix. 14.

what St. Augustine had said, (52) that the sacrifices and prayers offered for the dead whose life has been irreproachable, are acts of thanksgiving.

Before giving an account of the canonization of St. Francis, and of the celebrated translation of his body to the church which was built in his honour and in his name at Assisi, we must call attention to several instances of his heroic virtue and his holy doctrine, which we have reserved for this last book, not to interrupt the course of the history, and we shall add some particulars as to the marvellous gifts which heaven had so liberally dispensed to him.

The eminent perfection of St. Francis was grounded on a tender and fervent devotion to Jesus Christ crucified. This adorable object had a powerful attraction for his heart, was the source of all the graces he received, and the model of all the virtues he practised. From the sufferings of our Saviour he made for himself, as St. Bernard (53) had done, a nosegay of myrrh, which he always carried in his bosom ; he considered attentively the sufferings of his beloved, he suffered them himself, and they called forth his sighs and his tears; it was his wish that the fire of this love might transform him entirely into Him who had borne them. And by a return of love he received that signal and precious favour which he communicated in confidence to his companions, which always made him feel that he was in the presence of his Saviour, as if he saw Him with his own

(52) S. August. Enchirid. cap. cix, n. 29.

(53) S. Bernard. in cant. serm. xliii. n. 3.

eyes. In the colloquies, in the letters, and in the prayers which are found in his works, we see the admirable feelings he entertained for the crucified Jesus, and how much it was his wish that the whole world should know, love, and imitate Him; but there is nothing more to this purport than the two canticles which he composed shortly after he had received the impression of the Stigmata; he there, in the most vivid terms, expresses the tender affection with which these wonderful wounds had inflamed him. All this is collected together at the end of the particular history we give of the Stigmata.

The poverty of the Son of God, in His birth, during His life, and at His death, made such impression on the heart of Francis, that he embraced this virtue with inexpressible ardour.

Seeing that it was rejected by the world, and looking upon it as the pearl of the Gospel, to acquire it he abandoned father, mother, and all that he had. No person ever sought after riches with so much avidity, and no one ever guarded his treasure with so much care. He never wore, until his death, anything but a worthless tunic, and he refused himself everything but what was absolutely necessary. He would yield to no one in poverty, although he considered himself the most abject of all. If he saw any one worse dressed than he was, he considered it as a reproach to himself. One day, meeting a poor man who was almost naked, he said to his companion with a sigh: "There is a poor man who shames us. We have chosen poverty for our greatest

riches, and in him you see it shine far more than in us."

For his nourishment he greatly preferred what he solicited for the love of God from door to door, than what was offered to him. He frequently considered within himself, and it brought tears into his eyes, how poor our Saviour and His Blessed Mother had been in this world, and the reflection induced him to live in greater poverty.

As to the cells, he always chose the smallest. One of his secular friends having had one built, which was only made of wood, though pretty neat, in the hermitage of Sarthiano, he found it too fine, and said he would not enter it a second time unless it was put into a state of poverty; so that, in order to induce him to return, it was necessary to cover it roughly with branches of trees, both without and within; he left it afterwards because one of his companions had said to him, "Father, I am come to look for you in your cell." "I will not occupy it any longer," he replied, "because you consider it mine in calling it my cell; another may live in it, to whom it will not be appropriated."

This is what his companions tell us on the subject. "We have often heard him say, we, who have lived with him, 'I will not have as mine either dwelling-place, or any other thing; for our Master has said: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.'"(54)

(54) Luke ix, 58.

He was also accustomed to say: "When our Lord went to fast in the desert, where He remained forty days and forty nights, He had no cell prepared for Him, nor any other covering; it was only in some crevice of that mountain that He took repose." The same authors add, that, in order to imitate JESUS CHRIST perfectly, Francis desired to have neither convent nor cell which could be called his. And, moreover, if sometimes, on arriving, he pointed out to his brethren the cell which he proposed to occupy, he checked himself immediately, as having shown too much solicitude, and went into another, which had not been prepared for him. Shall, then, the children of the Patriarch of the poor be censured when they imitate this tenderness of conscience; and when, to show their aversion to the possession of property, they call even the things which are most essential for them to have the use of, by terms which show that they hold them in common, and that they have nothing which is their own?

Although the servant of God possessed every virtue in a very high degree, yet it was remarked that the virtue of poverty was the one which was above all the others; and this it pleased the Almighty to make known by an admirable vision. When the Saint was going to Sienna, three very poor women, who resembled each other both in size and countenance, and appeared to be of the same age, presented themselves before him, and greeted him in these words: "May the Lady Poverty be welcome." This salutation filled him with joy, because nothing was more grateful to

him in greeting him than to speak of poverty, which was so dear to him. The vision immediately vanished, and his companions, who had seen it, had no doubt that there was something mysterious in it; that God meant thereby to discover to them something which related to their Father. And in fact, says St. Bonaventura, these three women, who were so like to each other, were not bad representations of chastity, obedience, and poverty, which constitute the beauty of evangelical perfection, and were the very eminent characteristics of the saintly man; and the expressions which these women made use of in greeting him, showed that he had chosen poverty as his special prerogative, and the principal object of his glory; and, indeed, he was in the habit of calling it sometimes his lady, sometimes his mother, and sometimes his wife.

He constantly recommended it to his disciples; and if he perceived anything in them which did not coincide with his views of strict poverty, he was shocked at it. Many times he explained to them that his intention was, that a Friar Minor should have no other clothing than what was laid down by the rule. On this principle he would not give a Provincial leave to have any books for his own use which he might have collected; and when a Provincial asked him what he should do with the books which had cost so much money, "Brother," he replied,(55) "I will not, because of your

(55) Can we think that we have better reasons than S. Francis, for having books for our own peculiar use, and permitting others to have them.

books, corrupt the Gospel, according to which we have promised not to have anything of our own in this world; do what you please with your books, but my permission shall not be a snare for you, nor a stumbling-block."

One of his solicitudes was, that his brethren should not build any other than small and poor convents. "So do," he said to them, "that poverty shall be apparent among you in all things, principally in your houses; and do not live in them as if they were your own, but as belonging to some one else, as strangers and travellers."

A Siennese gentleman, who wished to have an establishment of Friars Minors in that city, and whose name was Bonaventura, came to him, to know how he would have the convent built. "My most honoured brother," Francis replied, "the place which you intend for us seems to me very appropriate, and we return you a thousand thanks for it. This is how it should be built upon. The brethren must first examine the ground, and see how many acres will suffice them, paying great attention to holy poverty, which they have promised God to adhere to, and to the good example which it behoves them to give on this head. After that let them address themselves to the Bishop, and say to him: 'My Lord, a gentleman of great influence here has given us, for the love of God, and the salvation of his own soul, a piece of ground fit to build a convent on. As you are the Pastor of the whole flock which is confided to you, and of the whole of the Friars Minors who are at present in your diocese, as well as of those who

will dwell therein hereafter, you are their protector and father, full of kindness; it is to you we come first, to be permitted to erect on that spot a poor and unostentatious dwelling, with the blessing of God, and with yours.' Having received the Bishop's permission, and his blessing, let them make a deep ditch, and, instead of walls, let them plant a thick hedge, as a mark of poverty and humility; let the house be of wood, and of earth, with cells in it in which they may pray and walk, as much for avoiding idleness as for adhering to the seemliness of their station. The church must be small; for they must not, on pretence of preaching, nor under any other pretext whatever, build large and handsome churches. They will give better example to the people in preaching in other churches, (56) and will manifest thereby that they are truly humble; moreover, when Prelates, and other members of the Clergy, or Religious of other orders, or Seculars, come to see them, a poor house and small cells will be a more edifying sermon in their regard than well-laboured discourses."

The holy Founder was desirous that all the houses of his order should be built upon this plan; but the princes and other benefactors had very beautiful edifices constructed according to their views of magnificence, and to their piety. Brother Leo, having been informed of this by his brethren,

(56) This is followed up sufficiently, since the Religious of S. Francis fill so many pulpits in cathedrals and in the parishes.—If they preach sometimes in their own churches, it is in consequence of the multitude of the faithful, and other reasons relative to the salvation of souls, in the different circumstances of time and place,

and others, who arrived from the further side of the Alps, spoke to Francis on the subject, to know what his opinion was on this head. "My brethren," he replied, addressing himself to all who were present, "there are even now some of our own people who build spacious convents; and others will come after us, who will build some so magnificent, that the lords of the earth might dwell in them, and they will wear costly habits; but it will be well in those days if they avoid committing mortal sins."

He believed that these great convents might be built without sinning mortally against the vow of poverty; but he saw also that much would be found in them contrary to the perfection of that virtue; and therefore he said that then it would be enough if mortal sin was avoided. The same may be thought of their tunics, which may be good and substantial, particularly in cold climates, provided the brethren, in accordance with the Rule, wear habits that are worthless. St. Bonaventura(57) notices the legitimate reasons for building spacious and commodious houses, and calls attention to five points,(58) in which those would sin grievously who should exceed on this head; and he says that the worthlessness of the habit must be judged of by the price, and by the colour.

However, religious persons know this important maxim of Christian morality, that, in order to avoid mortal sin in the observation of the law, it

(57) S. Bonavent. determ. circa regul. S. Franc. quæst 6.

(58) Those who are bent upon building and ornamenting religious edifices should read what the holy Doctor says on this subject. He approves only of what is reasonably necessary, considering the times, places, and persons.

is necessary to endeavour to abstain from those transgressions which may be only venial. Any contrary disposition is dangerous, either because it is extremely difficult to distinguish mortal from venial sin, as St. Augustin(59) remarks, or on account of the weakness of human nature, which urges one on beyond what is intended, and which becomes undeserving of the special graces which God gives to avoid falling into mortal sin, when he chooses to permit himself, all that appears to him to be only venial. On this principle the saints whom God has raised up in the order of the Friars Minors, in order to keep up the primitive fervour of the institution, have been very particular in following, with the greatest nicety, the regulations as to their buildings and dress, in order to attain the highest perfection of Poverty.

It is not possible to record in this place all the praise which the holy Founder gave to this evangelical virtue. He called it the Queen, not only because it shone with splendour in Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and in His Blessed Mother, but because it is elevated above all earthly things, which it tramples under foot. "Know," he used to say to his brethren, "that poverty is the hidden treasure of the Gospel, the basis on which an order rests, the special path to salvation, the support of humility, the mother of self-renunciation, the principle of obedience, the death of self-love, the destruction of vanity and cupidity, the rod of perfection, the fruits of which are abundant, though hidden. It is a virtue descended

(59) S. August. Enchir. n. 2. In Psalm lxxxviii. serm. n. 3 et alibi.

from heaven which acts within us, and enables us to despise everything which is despicable; it subverts all the obstacles which prevent the soul from perfectly uniting itself to God by humility and charity ; it causes those by whom it is beloved to become active as pure spirits, and enables them to take their flight towards heaven, to converse with angels, though still living on earth. It is so excellent and so divine a virtue, that vile and abject vases such as we are, are not worthy of containing it."

In order to obtain the grace of poverty, he often put up the following prayer to Jesus Christ: "O Lord Jesus, point out to me the ways of poverty, which are so dear to Thee. Have pity on me, for I love it with such intensity that I can find no repose without it, and Thou knowest that it is Thou who gavest me this ardent love. It is rejected, despised, and hated, by the world, although it is a dame, and a queen, and that Thou hast had the goodness to come down from heaven to make poverty Thy spouse, and to have from her, by her, and in her, perfect children. O Jesus, who choosest to be extremely poor, the favour which I ask of Thee, is to give me the privilege of poverty; I ardently desire to be enriched by this treasure ; I entreat of Thee that it may be mine, and of those who belong to me, and that we may never possess anything of our own under heaven for the glory of Thy name, and that we may exist during this miserable life, on those things only which are given to us, and to be very sparing in the use we shall make even of these. Amen."

This friend of poverty did not confine it to the repudiation of all external things; he carried its perfection to the most elevated spiritual point. "He who aspires to its attainment," he said, "must renounce not only all worldly prudence, but in some degree all learning and science, so that, being stripped of all sort of goods, he may place (60) himself under cover of the protection of the most High, think only of His justice, and cast himself into the arms of the Crucifix. For it is not to renounce the world entirely, if any attachment to its lights, and to one's own feelings, remain in the secret recesses of the heart." He did not assert that in order to arrive at the perfection of poverty, it was necessary to be without learning, but he required that learning should not be considered by the possessor as an interior property, from which self-love should be fed; that there should not be that secret attachment to mental illumination, which is the primary source of error, and the basis of the obstinacy of heretics; that all our knowledge should be referred to God, and that we should in some sense strip ourselves of it, to acquire the perception of God alone, and of His holy law. St. Hilary, said, speaking in the same sense, that we must always bear in mind that we are men, that we have nothing of our own, not even the use of our senses and faculties; that these come from God, and that we must only use them as things which are in a continual depend-

(60) He makes use of the following words of the Prophet in the sense usually given them: "Quoniam non cognovi litteraturam, introibo in potentias Domini; Domine memorabor justitiæ tuæ solius." Psalm lxx. 17.

ance on His will. (61) This is an important instruction for the consideration of the learned.

The lively affection which St. Francis bore for the crucified Jesus, from the moment of his conversion rendered him very austere towards himself. Not only could he not suffer that the tunic which he wore, should have anything soft in it, but he chose that it should be rough and harsh; when he found that it had become too soft, he put inside knotted cord to counteract it.

It was usually on the bare ground that he laid his body down, that body which was worn out by fatigue; sometimes he slept, sitting with his head resting on a stone, or piece of wood. As to food, he scarcely took what was absolutely necessary for his nourishment, and to keep life together. When in health, he seldom permitted anything to be put before him, which was cooked, and then he either strewed ashes upon, or added water to it, to take away the taste. Pure water was his only beverage, and then he drank so little, that it was insufficient for quenching his great thirst.

Besides the Lent kept by all Christians, he kept eight others in the course of the year. The first of forty days, from the day after the Epiphany, in memory (62) of our Lord's fast in the desert, after He had been baptized by John, which took place on the sixth day of January, according to the old

(61) S. Hilar. cap. iv. in Math.

(62) The Lent which is common to all the faithful, was likewise instituted in honour of the fast of Jesus Christ. It has been fixed before Easter as a preparation for the solemn memorial of His death and resurrection; it is an Apostolical tradition.

(63) tradition of the Church. The second was from the Wednesday in Easter week, to Whit-Sunday, to prepare himself for receiving the Holy Ghost. The third, from the day after the festivals of Pentecost, to the feasts of SS. Peter and Paul, in honour of these blessed apostles. The fourth, from the day after their festivals to the Assumption, in honour of the Blessed Virgin. The fifth in honour of St. Michael, from the Assumption to the feast of that angel. The sixth, from that feast to the first of November, in honour of all the saints. The seventh, from All-Souls to Christmas, to prepare himself to celebrate the birth of Christ. The eighth, from the feast of St. Stephen to the Epiphany, in honour of the three kings. Thus was his life a perpetual fast.

When he went abroad he ate whatsoever was (64) put before him, (65) not only to observe the direction of the Gospel, but in order to gain worldlings to Jesus Christ, by conforming to their ways; but when in the convent he resumed his habits of abstinence, and this mode of life was very edifying to laymen. The more he advanced towards perfection, the more he mortified his flesh, as if he only then began, and he hit upon new plans. We cannot form a more correct opinion of the evangelical hatred he bore his body, than by noticing the terms he made use

(63) Baron. ad ann. 31, n. 18.—Pagi. crit. ad ann. 25, 3. et ad ann. 29, 3.

(64) Luke x. 8.

(65) From this must be excepted the Lent which lasted from All Souls' Day to Christmas, which the Rule directs to be kept fasting, and which he strictly observed.

of to express it. After having finished Complin, and spent a considerable time in prayer, in a deserted church, in which he passed the night, he wished to take some rest. As the evil spirits prevented him from so doing, by suggestions which frightened him, and made him tremble, he mustered courage, rose, made the sign of the cross, and said in a loud voice: "Devils, I declare to you from Almighty God, that you may use against me all the power given to you by my Lord Jesus Christ, and do all the harm you can to my body. I am ready to suffer everything, and assuredly, you will oblige me greatly, for this body is a great burden to me; it is the greatest enemy I have, the most wicked, and the most crafty; and you will revenge me by so doing."

Brother Giles said of St. Francis; "He only wanted one thing—bodily strength. If his body had been as robust as mine, no man would have been able to imitate his macerations." (66) This is what is most wonderful in what he did, with so weak and delicate a constitution. There can be no doubt but that the grace of Jesus Christ gave him powerful support, but it required his fortitude to respond proportionally to that grace. If we were courageous in the service of God, we should mortify our bodies more than we usually do, particularly by abstinence, which is not less in accordance with reason and medicine, than it is to Christian morality.

He exhorted his religious to austerity in their food, in their clothing, and in everything else.

(66) Act. SS. 23 April, vit. b. Ægid. part 3, cap. v. n. 70.

For he was convinced, as was St. Augustin, (67) that it is difficult to satisfy the demands of the body, without in some degree sacrificing to sensuality; and he used to say, "Our Saviour praised St. John Baptist for his having clothed himself coarsely. According to His word: 'Behold they that are clothed in soft garments, are in the houses of kings;' (68) it must not be in the huts of the poor. I have found by experience that the devils fly from those who lead an austere life; and St. Paul teaches us: That they that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (69) It will be seen in the sequel how he knew how to temper what seemed excess in the mortifications of his brethren.

The austerity of his life did not render him less attentive in watching over his senses. He applied himself assiduously to their mortification, in order to preserve constantly the purity of his body and mind. The perfection he had acquired did not make him relax in any degree of his vigilance. He turned away his eyes from every object that might wound the soul; he never looked a woman in the face, nor did he know any one by sight. His maxim was that we must be very much on our guard in speaking to Christian virgins, and that the best way to strengthen them in chastity, is, to exhort them with chaste and pure eyes.

"My brethren," he said, "we must avoid with great care having any conversations, or familiarity

(67) S. August. confess. lib. x. cap. 31.

(68) Math. xi. 8. (69) Galat. v. 24.

with women, and even looking at them ; and so much the more must this be attended to, that in this we see the weak lose themselves, and the strong become weak. Unless our virtue is well tried, I am convinced that it is difficult to converse with them without contagion, as it is 'to walk on coals of fire without burning the soles of the feet,' as the Scripture says: 'It is dangerous to bear in one's mind images which are capable of rekindling flames which have been extinguished, and to soil the purity of a chaste mind.' All conversation with woman is frivolous and vain, unless in the confessional, and to give them good advice as to their salvation, or for reasonable decorum ; and then it should be in few words. What other objects can a religious have in conversing with them ? Too great security puts one less on his guard against the enemy, and if the devil has the smallest hold on a man he will soon increase that till it becomes formidable."

The servant of God taught his brethren to fly idleness, on account of the bad thoughts of which it is the source, and it is by useful occupation and frequent discipline, that rebellious and idle flesh must be subdued. "I desire," he said, "that my brethren may work and be occupied, lest, being idle, forbidden things may become spread over their hearts, and their tongues. He who desires to live by the labour of others, without doing anything, deserves to be nicknamed brother *fly* ; because, doing nothing that is worth anything, and spoiling what is good, he becomes odious and despicable to all the world." If he came upon any

one wandering about, and without occupation, he applied to him these words of the Apocalypse : "Because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (70) His example was an excellent lesson for not losing time, and fostering the idleness of the flesh ; he employed himself always holily, and he called his body brother ass, which required to be well worked, to be severely beaten, and to be badly fed.

Silence was not considered by him to be a small virtue ; he considered it as a guard to the purity of the heart, according to the maxim of wisdom : "Life and death are in the power of the tongue," (71) by which he understood the intemperance of speech, as well as that of taste. But he principally wished his brethren to become exact in keeping evangelical silence, which consists in abstaining from all idle conversation, of which an account must be rendered at the day of judgment, (72) and he severely reprimanded those who were in the habit of saying useless things. In fine, his instruction was, that they should endeavour to destroy all vice, and to mortify the passions ; and that, in order to succeed in this endeavour, everything should be cut off which could serve as an attraction, and, therefore, that the exterior senses by which death enters into the soul, should be continually mortified.

As soon as he felt the smallest temptation, or if he only foresaw it, he took every precaution for resisting it. At the beginning of his conversion

(70) Apoc. iii. 16. (71) Prov. xviii. 21.

(72) Math. xii. 36.

he frequently threw himself in the depth of winter into freezing water, in order to subdue his domestic enemy, and to preserve his robe of innocence without stain, asserting that it is far less painful to a spiritual man to suffer the rigour of the severest cold, than to feel interiorly the slightest attack upon his purity.

We have seen in his life that he threw himself into the midst of thorns, to drive away the tempter who wanted to induce him to moderate his watchings and his prayers. One of his actions, the circumstances of which are thus related by St. Bonaventura, show what was the purity of his heart, and with what force he resisted the impure spirit.

One night, while he was at prayer in his cell, at the hermitage of Sarthiano, he heard himself called three times by his name. After he had answered, a voice said to him: "There is no sinner in the world whom God does not pardon if he be converted, but whoever kills himself by too rigorous a penance, will never find mercy." Francis was made aware by a revelation that these deceitful words emanated from the old enemy, who wished to induce him to relax in his austerities, and he soon had sensible proof of it, "For he who by his breath sets fire to coals," as holy Job says, (73) "tempted him strongly to sin against purity." As soon as he became aware of it, he inflicted a severe discipline on himself, saying to his body: "O brother ass, this is what suits you, this is the way in which you should be chastised. The tunic you wear is that of religion, and is a

(73) Job. xli. 12.

mark of its holiness. It is not permitted to one who is impure to wear it, that would be a theft." As the devil represented to him probably that he might marry and have children, and have servants to wait upon him, he responded to that by turning his own body into derision, and treating it cruelly. With admirable fervour he burst from his cell and threw himself naked upon a large mound of snow, he made seven balls of it with his hands, and then said to himself: "The largest of these snowballs is thy wife, four others are thy two sons and two daughters, and the two last are thy man and thy maid servants. I must think of clothing them, for they are perishing with cold, and if this solicitude is overpowering, think of nothing else than serving God fervently." At this the tempter fled, and the saint returned victorious to his cell, and he never after had a similar temptation. One of his brethren, who was at prayer in the garden, saw by the light of the moon what was going on, and Francis being aware of it, could not avoid explaining to him the whole temptation: "But," said he, "I forbid you strictly from saying a word on the subject during my lifetime." It was only known after his death.

Those who know how far the scrupulousness of chaste souls (74) will carry them, will not feel sur-

(74) Heretics, who are as blind to the practice of virtue as they are to belief in the truth, have dared to censure this action of Saint Francis as an extravagance, which, in fact, is a heroic act of purity, and Bayle has dared to say that Francis of Assisi had lost his senses through very false ideas of devotion. What idea could such a man as Bayle form of devotion, whose Religion is still a problem, and whose scandalous Dictionary contains not fewer obscenities and infamies, than blasphemies and impieties? This infernal publication should not be searched on pretence

prised that after the example of many other saints he had put in practice such severe mortification, to shield himself from the slightest taint on his purity. His lively and agreeable turn of mind are apparent in the way in which he taunted his body when suffering from extreme cold ; this also shows how much self-possession he had under the severest trials, and by what sentiment he was actuated in his penances.

St. Bonaventura says, that as a skilful architect he laid down humility for the foundation stone of his spiritual edifice, and that it was from Jesus Christ that he had acquired this wisdom. The foundation was so solid, that humility became natural to him, as well as poverty, and that it is justly that he is called the humble St. Francis. He was in the eyes of all a mirror of holiness, but in his own eyes he was but a sinner ; on all occasions he sought to vilify himself, not only in his own mind, but in that of others.

Upon one occasion brother Pacificus, while praying with him in a church, was raised in an ecstacy, and saw several thrones in the heavens, among which there was one more splendid than the rest, ornamented with precious stones. As he was pondering for whom this magnificent seat could be destined, a voice said to him : " This was the seat of an angel, and now it is reserved for the humble Francis." Some short time after, when conversing with the saint, he led to the topic of the

of its learning and of the agreeableness and variety of its style. Should this trifling literary pleasure be preferred to the care a Christian should take to avoid everything which is contrary to the truths of faith and the purity of morals ?

knowledge of oneself, and he asked him what idea he had of himself, upon which St. Francis answered quickly: "I consider myself the greatest of sinners." Pacificus maintained that he could not conscientiously either say so or think so. "I am convinced," replied Francis, "that if the most criminal of men had experienced the great mercies I have received from Jesus Christ, he would be much more grateful for them than I am." This beautiful effusion confirmed Pacificus in the opinion he had entertained, that the vision he had seen was a true vision; and it is quite in accordance with the maxim of the Gospel that, "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and that he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (75) It is humility that raises men to those places from whence pride cast down the fallen angels.

We have seen the extraordinary things which Francis did in order to humble himself; for the same motive he felt no difficulty in making public the defects he thought he discovered in himself. If he found himself attacked by any temptation to pride, vain glory, or any other vice, he never failed communicating it to those who were present, whether they were religious or seculars. One day when he was followed by a great concourse of people, he gave his cloak to a poor woman who had asked him for an alms, and some minutes after he turned round to the crowd and told them in a loud voice that he had sinned from vain glory in so doing. We may imagine that his humility was at that moment very great, which

(75) Math. xxiii. 12.

prevented him from distinguishing between voluntary consent and the feeling over which we have no controul.

He took great care not to do anything in private which he should have had any hesitation in doing in public, and which was not in conformity with the opinion people had of his sanctity. His illness rendered it necessary he should eat meat in the Lent he kept before Christmas, but this relaxation consisted only in the use of lard; but he nevertheless accused himself of it in public, as an act of gluttony. His companions have recorded what he said. "I wish to live in hermitages and in other solitary places, as if I was seen by all the world; for, if people have a great opinion of me, and I were not to live as they think I do, I should be guilty of scandalous hypocrisy." The vicar of his convent suggested that he should permit his tunic to be lined with fox skins to keep his chest warm, which his disorder had greatly weakened. "I consent to this," he replied, "provided you put a similar set of skins outside, that the world may know the relief which is inside also." This condition put a stop to the proposition.

Praise mortified him, and he liked that people should blame him, and he rejoiced in being despised. When he heard people express by acclamation the merits of his sanctity, he made some of the brethren say to him, "You are a vulgar man, ignorant and useless in the world, a nobody;" and when he answered, with pleasure depicted on his countenance, "May the Lord bless you, my dear child, what you say is quite true,

and is exactly what the son of Peter Bernardo deserves to hear." To those who called him a saint he used to say, "Don't praise me, I may still sin, I have no assurance that I shall not; a person must never be praised whose end cannot be known." And he addressed the following words to himself: "Francis, if the Most High had bestowed so many favours on a thief, as He has on you, he would be much more grateful than you are."

The great honours which were paid him as a saint were very distressing to his humility, and he avoided them as much as possible, but when he could not escape from them he received them with a humble tranquillity, referring all to God, and meditating on the Passion of Jesus Christ.

One day when great honours were paid him, his companion remarking that he received them without showing any reluctance, said, "Father, don't you see what they are doing in your honour? and far from refusing to receive the applause manifested in your regard, as Christian humility requires, you seem to receive them with complacency. Is there anything which a servant of the Lord should more sedulously avoid?" This is the reply which the holy man made him: "Brother, although it may appear to you that they are paying me great honours, nevertheless know that I consider them as little or nothing in comparison with those which ought to be paid me." His companion was not only surprised, but almost scandalized on hearing him utter such sentiments; but not to expose his weakness, Francis added:

"Now, be attentive to this, and understand it properly. I refer to God all the honour which is paid me, I attribute nothing to myself; on the contrary, I look upon myself as dirt by my baseness, and I stick in this mire more and more. It is as those figures of wood or stone for which respect is had. They neither fail nor retain anything of it, it comes back to what they represent, but they remain always the same material, either wood or stone. Now when men know and honour God in His creatures, as they do in me, who am the vilest of all, it is no small profit to their souls."

This is the magnanimous humility of which St. Thomas (76) speaks, by which a man honours in himself the great gifts of God, permits them to be there honoured, and practises the great virtues to render him more worthy to receive new ones, while he shrinks from the contemplation of his own misery. Such was the humble Francis; in permitting for the glory of God, and the salvation of his neighbour, that the supernatural gifts which had been imparted to him, should be honoured in his person, while he himself only considered his own nothingness; and afterwards he retired into solitary places, where he passed whole nights in meditating upon this nothingness, and on the infinite mercy of God, which had loaded him with graces.

Being one day with brother Leo in one of these solitudes, and being without the books (77) neces-

(76) 24. 2æ. 2æ. Quæst. 29, Act. iii. ad quartum.—

(77) The Divine Office was then very long and there were only manu-

sary for saying the Divine Office, he invented a sort of humiliating psalmody for glorifying God during the night. "My dear brother," he said to Leo, "we must not let this time which is consecrated to God pass without praising His holy name, and confessing our own misery. This is the verse which I will say: 'O brother Francis! you have committed so many sins in this world, that you have deserved to be plunged into hell.' And you, brother Leo, your response will be, 'It is true you deserve to be in the bottom of hell.'" Leo promised, however repugnant he felt, to answer as his Father desired; but instead of that he said: "Brother Francis, God will do so much good through your means, that you will be called into Paradise." The Father said to him with warmth: "You don't answer as you ought. Here is another verse: 'Brother Francis, you have offended God by so many bad deeds, that you deserve all his maledictions.' Answer to that: 'You deserve to be among the number of the cursed.'" Leo promised again; but when the Saint had said his verse, striking his breast, and shedding abundance of tears, Leo pronounced these words: "Brother Francis, God will render you such, that among those who are blessed, you will receive a peculiar blessing." Why don't you answer as I desire you, said Francis, surprised? I command you, under obedience, to repeat the words which I am going to give you. I shall

script books, which were very expensive; for this reason, when the Order was in its beginning they had none in many of the houses, particularly in solitary places.

say: "O brother Francis, miserable man! After so many crimes committed against the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, do you think he will have any pity on me? In truth you are undeserving of pardon." Brother Leo answer immediately: "You deserve no mercy." Leo however said: "God, our Father, whose mercy infinitely surpasses our sins, will pardon you all yours, and will load you with His favours."

Then Francis said somewhat angrily: "Why have you dared to transgress the rule of obedience, and to answer so often so differently to what I desired?" Leo excused himself most respectfully, saying: "My very dear Father, God is my witness that I had each time intended to repeat the words which you had directed me, but He put into my mouth the words I uttered, and caused me to speak, notwithstanding my resolution, according to His good pleasure." The humble servant of JESUS CHRIST admired this disposition of the Lord; but persisting nevertheless in his intention of humbling himself, he entreated brother Leo to repeat, at least once, the following words, which he pronounced with many sighs: "O brother Francis, miserable little man, do you think that God will have mercy on you, after so many crimes which you have committed?" "Yes, my Father," replied Leo, "God, your Saviour, will have mercy on you, and will grant you great favours. He will exalt you, and glorify you eternally, because he who shall humble himself shall be exalted.(78) Nevertheless, pardon me for not

(78) Math. xxiii. 12.

having said what you desired. It is not I who speak, it is God who speaks in me." Finally, Francis bowed to what Leo communicated to him, who only disobeyed him by an impulse of the Holy Ghost; and they conversed during the remainder of the night on the great mercy of God to sinners with great consolation. Such persons as have the spirit of God, and the love of perfect humility, will find nothing but what is noble and great in the simplicity of this colloquy; and it is for such that it has appeared to us useful to record it.

It has been already remarked, with St. Bonaventura, that St. Francis had given to his brethren the name of Minors, and to their Superiors that of Ministers, in order that their very name should cause them to be humble. These are the maxims by which he used to impress this upon them. "The Son of God debased Himself in coming from the bosom of His Father to us, to teach us humility by His example, and by His word, as our Lord and Master." "What is exalted in the eyes of man(79) is an abomination

(79) This is what Our Lord said on the subject of the Pharisees, who drew upon themselves the esteem of men by exterior acts of piety, but which God had in abhorrence in consequence of the views with which they were filled. This may also be applied to Innovators who impose on the multitude by the regularity of their exterior, and the severity of their morals, by an air of great piety and by large alms; but God detests their pride which renders them rebels to the Church and makes them lose their faith. The virtues which are noticed in them are not true Christian virtues, worthy of eternal life; for these virtues Saint Augustin says, must be grounded on faith: "Without Faith," as pure and holy as what was required by Saint Paul, "it is impossible to please God." Moreover, the loss of faith, which often proceeds from the corruption of morals, very often is the cause of their corruption.—There is scarcely any sect, of which it may not be said, what Saint John said of Babylon that its

before God." Man is nothing but what he is before God, and is nothing more. It is folly to feel glorified by the applause of man; it is better to be blamed than praised, for blame induces the person to correct himself, while praise leads to his fall. No man should pride himself for doing those things which a sinner may do as well as he.—A sinner may fast, pray, weep, macerate his body, but what he cannot do, as long he is a sinner, is to be faithful to his God. Now, this is what we may glory in, to render to God the glory which is due to Him, to serve Him faithfully, and to return with like fidelity all that He has given. Happy the servant who finds himself as humble amidst his brethren, inferiors like himself, as in presence of his superiors! Happy the servant who does not believe himself better when men load him with praises, than when he appears in their eyes simple, vile, abject, and despicable. Happy the servant who bears reprimanding with meekness, who acknowledges his fault with humility, and voluntarily punishes it; who is sufficiently humble to receive a reprimand without offering an excuse, and the shame of a fault, of which he has not been guilty? Happy the religious who has not been desirous of the elevation he has attained, and who always wishes to be at the feet of the others! Woe to the religious who has been raised by the rest to an honourable post, and who has not the inclination to descend from it!

The example of Jesus Christ, who "was obe-

name is Mysterium: Mystery of iniquity. S. Augustin. contr. Julian. lib. iv. n. 24 and 25. Hebr. xi. 6. Tit. i. 13, et alibi.—Apoc. xvii. 5.

dient until death, even until the death of the Cross,"(80) inspired St. Francis with great love for obedience. Although he was appointed Superior by order of God and of the Pope, he was always desirous of obeying rather than commanding. In his travels, he promised obedience to him who accompanied him, and he rigidly kept that promise. One day he communicated the following in confidence to his companions:— "Among all the graces which I have received from the bounty of God, this is one, that if they were to appoint a novice of an hour's standing to be my guardian, I would obey him as implicitly as if he was the oldest and the most serious of our brethren." He was not satisfied with having renounced being general of the Order, to obey the Vicar-General, he asked brother Elias, who filled that situation, to give him a guardian, in whose will he should depend in all things: brother Angelo of Rieti was given to him, and he obeyed him with entire submission.

The instructions he gave his brethren on the subject of obedience contained all the perfection which could be given them, 1st. To renounce their own will, and to look upon it as the forbidden fruit, which our first parents could not eat of without being guilty. 2. To abandon themselves wholly to their superior, so that they should neither do nor say anything which they know he would not approve of; and that they should do what he wishes the moment he has spoken, without waiting for his speaking a second time.

(80) Phil. ii. 8.

3. Not to examine whether what is ordered is difficult or impossible, for, said St. Francis, "When I order anything which is above your strength, holy obedience will enable you to effect it." 4. To submit their lights to those of the superior, not with a view of obeying him in anything manifestly contrary to salvation, but to act upon his views, although they may think their own better, and more useful. 5. Not to consider the man, nor his qualifications, in the obedience they bow to, but the authority he has, the place he fills, and the greatness of Him, for whose love they are subject to man.

This last point is the greatest sacrifice of a religious life; but a necessary sacrifice, one which is just, and worthy of God, and the most certain proof that our obedience is grounded on our love for Him. It is not difficult to follow the dictates of a superior of acknowledged talent and merit; the hardship is to submit with humility, without remonstrance or murmur, to one who has not these qualifications. This also it is which enhances in the eyes of God the value of religious obedience, it may then be considered as a sort of martyrdom of the mind, which will receive its crown in heaven, as well as that of the body. Nevertheless, it is requisite to be cautious, lest antipathy or some other motive, and the natural revolt of the human heart against authority should cause a superior to appear contemptible who really is not so. Finally, the religious are highly interested in practising holy obedience, whoever may be the superior; it is, as St. Francis remarks, so abundant in fruits,

that such as bend to the yoke, pass not a moment of their lives without some spiritual profit: it increases virtue, and procures peace to the soul.

He was asked one day, who was to be considered to be truly obedient, and he instanced a dead body. "Take," said he, "a dead body, and place it where you please; you will see that it shows no repugnance at its removal, it utters no complaint at its situation, nor of dissatisfaction at being left where it is. If you put it in an honourable place, its eyes will remain closed, it will not raise them. If you clothe it in purple, it will only be paler than before. That is true obedience; it asks no reason as to why it is put in motion, it is indifferent as to where it is placed, and does not require to be moved. If such an one is raised to the dignity of superior, he remains equally humble; the more he is honoured, the more does he think himself unworthy of it. "I have often," he said, "seen a blind man, led by a little dog, and who went wherever his guide took him, in good roads and in bad. This is another resemblance of one who is perfectly obedient; he should shut his eyes, and be blind to the commands of his superiors, think of nothing but submitting immediately to him, without stopping to examine whether the thing be difficult or not, only keeping in view the authority of him who gives the order, and the merit of obedience."

Disobedience is insupportable; he considered it as the unfortunate offspring of pride, which is the source of all evils, and of which he had great horror. One day while praying in his cell, and

meditating between God and his brethren, he saw in spirit one of them who refused to perform the penance imposed on him in chapter by the Vicar-General, and excusing himself as to the fault, of which he had been accused. He called his companion, and said: "I saw on the shoulders of this insubordinate brother, the devil, who was wringing his neck, and leading him as by a bridle. I prayed for him, and the devil, abashed, loosed his hold immediately. Go to him, and tell him to bend immediately to the yoke of obedience." In fact, the brother did submit as soon as he was told this, and threw himself humbly at the feet of his superior.

Another, who had erred in some way against obedience, was brought to Francis, that he might correct him: but he appeared so penitent, that the Saint, who liked the humility of repentance, felt himself inclined to pardon the fault. Nevertheless, lest the facility of pardon should be abused, and to show what chastisement disobedience deserved, he ordered his cowl to be taken from him, and thrown into the fire. Some minutes after he desired it to be taken out of the fire, and to be returned to him, when it was found that the fire had not injured it in the least. "God having shown by this miracle," St. Bonaventura observes, "the power He gave to His servant, and how agreeable to Him humble repentance is.

The conduct of the Holy Founder was more severe to one of his brethren, who was obstinately disobedient. After having caused him to be stripped, he desired the others to put him into a

pit, and to fill it up with earth, in order to bury him alive: when they had filled it up to his chin: "Brother," he said, "are you dead?" The religious, absorbed in grief, replied: "Yes, Father, and I ought to die in reality for my sin." Francis, moved by compassion, had him dug out, saying: "Come forth from thence, if you are truly dead, as a good religious ought to be to the world and its concupiscences. Obey the smallest sign of the will of your superiors, and make no more resistance to their orders than a dead body could do. I wish for followers, not living, but those who are dead."

It was only a feint to frighten him; but it served to show that disobedience in religion, particularly when it is accompanied by obstinacy, must be severely punished. In fact, obedience is the basis of the religious state; and if this virtue be shaken, the fabric must tremble and be destroyed. For this reason St. Benedict (81) directed that a religious who persevered in disobedience, should be excommunicated, and receive corporal punishment. Nor must we be surprised at this, since in the Old Law (82) God commanded that an incorrigible son should be stoned on the complaint of the father or mother, (83) in order

(81) Reg. S. Bened. cap. 23.

(82) Deut. xxi. 18, et seq.

(83) On this passage, M. de Sacy says, "that it was a figure of the inflexible justice which God will exert against all the Sons of the Church, whom neither the prudent remonstrances of this affectionate Mother, nor the warnings of him (the Pope) whom He desires that we should consider as our Father, have been able to convert. These two formidable witnesses will combine against them at the Judgment seat, and they will be eternally punished for their revolt." This is the dreadful decree pronounced

that all Israel, after such an example, should be awed with fear. We find in the life of St. Francis many examples of severe penances inflicted by him for disobedience; such as sending brother Ruffinus to preach without a cowl, for having excused himself from going, on account of his want of genius for that employment.

He once called brother Juniper to employ him on something, and this brother not having immediately obeyed, because he was busy in planting a Juniper tree, he cursed the tree that it should never grow, and it remained always in a dwarf state. The Fathers of the desert were similarly exact in their attention to obedience, insomuch as to leave a letter unfinished when they had to attend to the orders of a superior.(84)

The virtues of St. Francis, which we have recorded, and those which we have yet to narrate, were cultivated by the exercise of prayer. He had the gifts as soon as he was called to the service of God, and he followed it up so faithfully, that he consecrated to it his heart, his body, all his actions, and all his time. In-doors, or out of doors, walking or seated, working or resting, his mind was always raised to heaven; he seemed to live with the angels. As he was always diffident of himself, he had recourse to prayer, and consulted the Almighty, with perfect confidence in

by one on whom no suspicion can rest in this respect. Why do they not submit to the Pope and to the Church, not to expose themselves to this rigor?

(84) Cassian. de Instit. Renunt. cap. xii.

His goodness, in all that He had to do. Although he could pray in any place he might happen to be in, nevertheless, he found solitary spots best adapted for recollection; he sought them out, and often retired to them. This shows us why he made so many houses of his order, where there had previously been hermitages only.

Careful in attending to the interior calls of the Holy Spirit, if he perceived one coming on, he let his companions go forward, and stopped, not to receive it in vain, and to enjoy it to its full extent. When he prayed in community, he avoided all exterior signs, which might discover the secret dispositions of his mind, because he loved secrecy. He did not find the precaution difficult, because he was wholly absorbed in his interior, and united himself so intimately to God, that he was almost without exterior motion. If it happened that he was surprised by a visit from heaven in the presence of his brethren, he had always something ready to propose to them to take off their attention. When he returned from prayer, in which he had been marvellously transformed, he strove to conform himself to his brethren, lest what they might perceive might draw from them applause, which would deprive him of his reward by inspiring him with vanity.

But in the solitudes he was under no restraint, and gave his heart entire liberty. The words resounded with his sacred sighs and laments; the earth was moistened with his tears, and he struck his breast with violence. Sometimes he addressed himself to God as to his sovereign Lord;

sometimes he spoke to Him as to his judge; sometimes he prayed to Him as to his Father; and at other times, he conversed with Him as a friend converses with his friend. He solicited the pardon of sinners with loud and energetic exclamations; and he expressed his horror at the Passion of Jesus Christ in loud laments, as if he had been present at it. All this was seen and heard by some one or other of his companions, who had the pardonable curiosity to watch his proceedings. The devils tormented him severely during his prayers, and that in a very sensible manner, as St. Bonaventura informs us; but, protected by celestial aid, he continued his prayers with additional fervour, in proportion to the efforts they made to distract him.

God favoured him with the gift of contemplation in a sublime degree. His companions bear witness that they have often seen him in a state of ecstasy, in which he had lost all the use of his senses, and in which all the powers of his soul were suspended. Once they saw him during the night raised from the ground, and his arms extended in the shape of a cross, surrounded by a luminous cloud, as if to betoken the Divine light, which filled his mind. St. Bonaventure says that they had efficient proof that God at such times revealed to Him some of the great secrets of His wisdom; but His faithful servant only made such parts of them known, as were for the glory of his Master, or the utility of his neighbour.

One of his brethren, not finding him one evening in his cell, went to look for him in the wood.

Having penetrated a short distance into it, he heard him praying with loud cries, for the salvation of men, and addressing the Blessed Virgin with moving sighs, humbly imploring her to show him her Son. He then saw the blessed Mother of God descend from heaven with great splendour, and place her Son into the arms of Francis, who received Him, as Simeon had received Him in the temple of Jerusalem,(85) with the profoundest respect; he carressed the Infant most tenderly, entreating Him for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of the world. At this sight the religious fell on the ground half dead, and remained on the spot where he fell; here the saint found him, as he was returning to the convent for matins; he brought him to himself from this fainting, but strictly forbad him from telling any one what had occurred; but he, thinking it for the glory of God, not to be obliged to obey in this instance, communicated the marvel to all the others.

A novice whom the holy patriarch had received, and whom he was taking to the convent of the noviciate, wished to know what he did during the night. In order to succeed, he tied his cord to that of the Father, whom he saw asleep in the fields in which they had been obliged to remain, and laid himself down near him, in order that he might be roused as soon as he should stir. A few hours afterwards, Francis wished to get up, but finding himself fastened by the cord, he untied the knot,

(85) Luke ii. 28.

and went to pray under some neighbouring trees. The novice not finding him when he awoke, went to seek him under the trees. A celestial light caused him to draw near to a spot, where he stopped, and from whence he saw Jesus Christ surrounded by angels, His Blessed Mother, and St. John Baptist, who were in conversation with him. His astonishment made him fall on the ground, where he remained, till Francis, to whom God had imparted the circumstance, came and raised him up, and restored him to his senses, forbidding him to speak of the vision. The young man, who continued to live very holily, kept the secret; but after Francis's death, he published what he had seen.

God chose that his servant should be respected in the secret retirements to which he went to pray, and that he should not be disturbed at those times. The bishop of Assisi knew this by his own experience. One day, when he had come to the convent of Portiuncula, as he frequently did, he wished to go at once into the cell, where the saint was at prayer; but scarcely had he seen him in that attitude, when he was pushed back by an invisible hand; his body became stiff, and he was unable to speak. Much astonished at this accident, he made his way back as well as he could to the other brethren; God restored his voice, and he made use of it to acknowledge that he had committed a fault. The celestial Spouse in the Canticles conjures the daughters of Jerusalem, "not to awaken her whom he loves, and not to disturb her repose until she awakes of her

own accord."(86) St. Bernard on this, says that such as are given to prayer should not be troubled about useless affairs, and that those who disturb them when they are conversing with God, become enemies of heaven.(87)

In consequence of the knowledge which Francis had of the sweets and fruits of mental prayer, he constantly urged his brethren to practise it, and they profited so fully by his instructions, that most of them became spiritual and contemplative men. "A Religious," he said, "must principally desire to acquire the spirit of prayer. I believe that, without that, peculiar favours cannot be obtained from God, nor any great progress made in His service. When one is sorrowful and uneasy, he should have immediate recourse to prayer, and remain before his heavenly Father, until such time as the joy of salvation is restored to him. If one remains in this state of depression and disturbance, this disposition, which comes from Babylon, will increase and produce rust, unless it be purified by tears."

He taught them to shun the tumult of the world, and to seek for solitary places in which to pray, because he knew that the Holy Ghost communicates Himself more intimately to souls in such places; but he recommended them to be perfectly secret as to the favours they might receive; his maxim being, that a slender human communication often causes the loss of that which

(86) Cant. ii. 7; and iii. 5.

(87) S. Bern. in Cant. serm. lii. n. 6.

is of inestimable value, and has the effect of preventing the Lord from again communicating what He had previously given ; that when one is visited by God, he should say : " It is Thou, O Lord, who hast sent me this consolation from heaven; to me who am a sinner, wholly unworthy of Thy bounty. I commit it back to Thy keeping ; for I feel myself capable of stealing Thy treasure from Thee ;" and when he returns from prayer he should show as much humility and self-contempt, as if he had received no peculiar favour.

All the masters of spiritual life have had similar opinions of the value of mental prayer, as this contemplative saint, and they have pointed out the necessity of it for advancing in the ways of virtue. St. Teresa wrote so sublimely on this practice, that the Church prays to God that " her heavenly doctrine may be our nourishment ;" she declares that she was near being lost from having given it up, but that our Lord had done her the signal favour to urge her to resume it ; she exhorts all to apply themselves to it, even should they make but small progress in it, because it is always useful, and if persevered in, will be attended with great benefit. This is what directors might represent to those who seriously wish to attend to their salvation, and to say to them with the same saint, " that mental prayer is nothing else but holding friendly intercourse with God, often remaining alone in conversation with Him, whom we know loves us."

The practice of mental prayer no way diminish-

ed the zeal of St. Francis, for vocal prayer, (88) which every Christian ought to resort to as he did. Vocal prayer was practised and taught (89) by Jesus Christ; the Church employs it in her public worship. "We require it," says St. Austin, (90) "to assist our memory and understanding, and to animate our fervour; finally, God desires that we should offer to Him "a sacrifice of praise," and that it shall be, "the fruits of our lips and hearts, giving glory to His name;" (91) because our body and soul belong to Him. Piety had inspired the holy man to compose vocal prayers on various subjects, which he often repeated, and some of which he recited daily. He said the Lord's Prayer with particular devotion, weighing all the words, and meditating on the sense they contain, as is seen by the paraphrase of it he composed, and which we think it useful to insert at length.

"Our Father, most happy and most holy, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Consoler. Who art in Heaven; in the angels, in the saints, in the illuminated, in order that they may know Thee, who inflamest them by Thy love; for, O Lord, Thou art the light and the love who dwellest in them, and who art their beatitude by satiating

(88) J. Alvarez de Paz of the Society of Jesus, speaks highly of vocal prayer before his treatise on mental prayer. De Studio Orationis tom. iii. Oper.

(89) Our Lord addressed vocal prayer to God His Father after the Supper, John, vii. 1. And He taught vocal prayer to His Apostles, when He said to them: "You shall therefore pray in this manner: Our Father who art in Heaven," &c. Math. vi. 9.

(90) S. Aug. epist. ad Probam. xlii. alias cxxi. cap. ix. et de Serm. Dom. in monte, lib. ii. cap. 3.

(91) Hebr. xiii. 15.

them: Thou art the sovereign and eternal good, from whom all good proceeds, and without Thee there is no other good: "Hallowed be Thy name:" in order to that, make Thyself known to us, by vivid lights, so that we may see the full extent of Thy bounty, the duration of Thy promises, the sublimity of Thy majesty, and the depth of Thy judgments: "Thy kingdom come:" in order that Thou mayest reign in us by grace, and that Thou mayest bring us to Thy kingdom, where Thou art clearly and perfectly loved, where we become happy in Thy society, and where Thou art eternally enjoyed: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:" in order that we may love Thee "with our whole hearts," thinking always of Thee "with our whole soul," ever longing for Thee; "with all our mind," referring to Thee all our views, seeking Thy glory in all things; "with all our strength," employing in Thy service for Thy love, all the strength of our bodies and souls, without making any other use of them; that we may love our neighbour as ourselves, using all our efforts to draw them to Thy love, rejoicing in all the good that happens to them, as if it was our own; being grieved at any ills which may befal them, and giving offence to none: "Give us this day our daily bread:" it is Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, we ask Thee for Him, in order to remind us of the love He has shown us, and of what He has said, done, and endured for us; we ask Thee to make us fully comprehend these things, and cause us to revere them: "Forgive us our trespasses:" by Thy infinite mercy, by the Passion

of Thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the merits and intercession of the blessed Mary, and of all the elect: "As we forgive them that trespass against us;" what may be not altogether remitted on our part, grant us the favour, O Lord, to remit entirely, in order that for love of Thee, we may sincerely love our enemies, and may intercede for them fervently at Thy throne; that we may not render to any one evil for evil, and that in Thee we may endeavour to do good to all: "And lead us not into temptation:" (92) hidden, manifest, sudden, grievous: "But deliver us from evil:" past, present, and to come. Amen: willingly and gratuitously." These two words show that he ardently desired what he prayed for; and that it was purely for the glory of God, without any temporal interest.

He recited the Divine Offices with a devotion full of respect, and with great fervour. St. Bonaventura says, that although he suffered greatly from pains in his head, from his stomach, and from his liver, he never leant while reciting it, that he stood during the whole time, with his head uncovered, his eyes looking down. In travelling he always stopped to say it; however much it might rain,

(92) That is to say, permit us not to be led into temptation, and inclined to sin; for as Saint James says: "God is not capable of tempting to evil." And when He allows the Devil so to tempt us, it is not with a view of our yielding, as Zuinglius, Calvin, and Beza have dared to say; on the contrary, it is to give us the opportunity of conquering and meriting by His grace. Now, although it be true that God by an effect of His wisdom and goodness, permits temptations for the benefit of mankind, He nevertheless teaches them to mistrust their own weakness, to solicit His favour not to be exposed to temptations, and should they arise, His grace to get the better of them. S. August. epist. 130, cap. xi. et de Dono Persever. cap. 5.

he never omitted this pious practice, and he gave this reason for it: If the body rests in order to take its food, which will, as well as himself, soon become the food of worms, with how much tranquillity ought the soul to take its spiritual nourishment, which is to cause it to live eternally.

The verse, Gloria Patri, &c., made a lively impression on his heart, once he repeated it in thankfulness to God for His bounty after each verse of the Magnificat, which brother Leo was reciting, and he exhorts all to say it frequently. A lay brother, who was strongly tempted to apply himself to study, having come to ask his permission, "My dear brother," said he, "learn the Gloria Patri, &c., and you will know the whole of the Holy Scripture." The brother obeyed, and had no further temptation on that head.

The distractions which his lively imagination caused him during the holy exercises, appeared to him to be great faults, and he never failed to confess them, and to expiate them by penance, asserting that we ought to be ashamed of being distracted by trifles when speaking to the great King. Once during Tierce the thought of a little vase which he had made came into his head, and called off his attention, he immediately went and took it and threw it into the fire, saying: "I will sacrifice it to the Lord, whose sacrifice it has hindered." But he acquired the habit of reciting the office so attentively that these sort of distractions seldom importuned him.

His application was equally strong and respectful in reciting the Psalms, as if God had been

present in a sensible manner; and he found so much sweetness in the name of God, that he seemed to have the taste of sweetness on his lips after having pronounced it. Thus the prophet said to the Lord: "How sweet are Thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth." (93) Francis had also an interior joy in pronouncing the holy name of Jesus, which communicated itself to his exterior, and produced on his senses a similar effect as if he had tasted something agreeable to his palate, or heard some harmonious sounds.

He desired that these sacred names should be peculiarly reverenced, not only when people thought of them, or pronounced them, but whenever they saw them written. This is the reason why in his last will he recommends his brethren to pick them up should they find them scattered about in unseemly places, and put them in a better locality, lest they should be disrespectfully trampled upon. This must be considered not as a mere nicety of feeling, but as a sentiment inspired by faith, which teaches us to venerate the word of God. If a great bishop (94) has thought it proper to compare the abuse of the sacred Word, when it is announced, to the profanation of the body itself of Jesus Christ, may we not, in the same spirit, say that he who permits that Word to be trampled upon when it is written, becomes in some measure as guilty as if he had allowed the sacred body of our Saviour to be treated with similar indignity?

(93) Psalm cxviii. 103.

(94) Serm. ccc. n. 2, in Append. tom. v. Oper. 2, Aug. edit. Ben. Tribuitur. S. Cæs. Aul. episc.

It was the love of God which gave St. Francis so much zeal for mental prayer, as well as for that which is vocal. He sought his beloved from whom he was only separated by the wall of his flesh. To be present to Him in spirit, and to contemplate Him, were his sole consolations, and his anxiety to gain these was intense. But then the frequent exercise of prayer increased his love, and inflamed it to that degree, that St. Bonaventura does not think it possible to find words to express it. This divine charity penetrated his whole interior, as fire penetrates a burning coal. Only by hearing the term of the love of God pronounced, he was moved and inflamed, and this movement made the affections of his soul thrill as the strings of a musical instrument sound on being touched.

To excite himself more and more to the love of God he made use of all creatures, as of so many mirrors in which he viewed the supreme reason, the sovereign beauty, and the principle of being and of life. They were for him as so many steps by which he raised and united himself to the object of his love, as so many streamlets in which he tasted with inconceivable unction, the infinite purity of the source from whence all that is good is derived ; so many delightful strains whose harmony resounded on his ears, and which, as David in his Psalms, he (95) invited to praise and glorify Him who had given them their tones. Wholly inflamed with love he prayed to be enabled to love still more, and he addressed the following prayer to God, which is found among his works. "Grant,

(95) Psalm cxli.

O Lord, that the mild vehemence of Thy ardent love may separate me from everything which is under heaven, and may consume me entirely, in order that I may die for the love of Thy love, since it was for the love of my love that Thou didst deign to die. I solicit this through Thyself, O Son of God, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen."

And here is another which he used to say every day: "My God and my all, who art Thou, O sweet Lord! and who am I, Thy servant, a miserable worm? I wish to love Thee most holy Lord, I wish to love Thee. O God, I have consecrated to Thee my heart and my body! If I had the means of doing more for Thee I would do it, and I ardently wish I had the means."

This poor evangelical could not give more to God than his body and soul. He continually offered the sacrifice of his body by the rigour of his fasts, and that of his soul by the vehemence of his desires; "by which," says St. Bonaventura, "he conformed in a spiritual manner to the practice of the Old Law, which was to offer holocausts out of the Tabernacle, and to burn incense within it." (96)

The sacrifice of his desires went to a great extent. For the love of God he had renounced all the things of this earth, he had stripped himself of everything, so that he was literally naked; he had embraced the severest poverty, and practised the most austere penitential life; he had devoted

(96) Exod. xxx, 5; and xl. 27.

himself to the ministry of preaching, and to the establishment of his Order; his life was but a course of labours and fatigue, but he reckoned all that as nothing; he wished to do much more, to mortify himself more rigorously, to forward thereby the glory of God, because, according to the words of our Saviour, this is the greatest mark of love which a friend can give to his friend. (97) This was the motive of the ardent desire he had to endure martyrdom, and of the three voyages he undertook in search of it; seeing that he could not succeed, he lowered his views to wishing for and soliciting grace to know what he could do, to testify his love for God. The Lord granted his desire, favouring him with the impression of His five wounds, which rendered him a living and, at the same time, an expiring martyr; but it inflamed his heart to such a degree, that then he wished to die for love, and to be absorbed in the love of Him whom he loved, saying in a holy transport in one of his canticles: "Per amor si clamo. Amor che tanto bramo, fa mi morir d'amore. Amor, amor, fa mi in te transire."

Inflamed with divine love, he endeavoured to spread the fire on all sides. He often made it the subject of his discourses, and it was usually the motive he employed to animate his brethren to the practice of virtue. When he proposed anything that was difficult to them, such as to go about soliciting alms: "Go," he would say, "and ask it for the love of God." He found a noble prodigality in asking it for that motive, and he

(97) John xv. 13.

thought those demented who preferred money to the love of God, the price of which is incalculable, and sufficient to purchase the kingdom of heaven, and which the love of Him who has so loved us must make infinitely dear to us. They were surprised one day to find that he could bear the severity of winter in so miserable a habit as that which he wore, and full of fervour he gave this reason, which contains a very useful lesson. "If we were inwardly inflamed with a longing for our celestial country we should easily bear exterior cold." It was his wish that a Friar Minor should love God with an effective, liberal, and generous love, which should enable him to suffer calmly and joyfully pain and opprobrium for the object of his love. This is what he said one day to brother Leo on the subject, in a conversation which Leo himself has recorded at full length. "If a Friar Minor had a clear and distinct knowledge of the course of the stars, and of all other things in the universe; if he possessed all the sciences, all the languages, and a perfect knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and if he spoke with the tongues of angels, cast out devils, performed all sorts of miracles, even that of raising one from the dead who had been four days in the tomb, if he had the gift of prophesy, and that of discerning the affections of the heart, if he preached to the infidels with such success as to convert them all, and if he should edify the world by his sanctity, all that would not be to him the subject of perfect and true joy."

Afterwards, to show in what this true joy con-

sisted, he proposed a supposition, similar to one he had made on another subject, and very like to this hypothesis of St. Paul: "Who shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or persecution, or the sword?" (101) From which he concluded, that all that there is in heaven or on earth could not separate him from the love of God, which is grounded on Jesus Christ our Lord.

"I suppose," said St. Francis, "that we were to arrive at the convent of St. Mary of the Angels very wet, covered with mud, perishing with cold, dying of hunger, and that the porter, instead of letting us in, were to leave us at the gate in this pitiable state, saying angrily, 'You are a couple of idle vagabonds, who stroll about the world and receive the alms which the real poor ought to get.' If we bear this treatment with patience, without being discomposed, and without murmuring, if even we think humbly and charitably that the porter knows us well for what we are, and that it is by God's leave that he behaves thus to us, mark this down, as perfect joy.

"I suppose, moreover, that we continue to knock at the door, and that the porter, considering us importunate, should come out and give us some severe boxes on the ears, and say, 'Get along, scoundrels, go to the hospital, there is nothing for you to eat here.' If we bear all these things patiently, and we pardon him from our hearts, and with charity, note, this would be a subject for perfect joy.

(98) Rom. viii. 35, 38 and 39.

"Let us, in fine, suppose, that in this extremity the cold, hunger, and the night, compel us to entreat, with tears and cries, to be allowed to enter the convent, and that the porter, in great irritation, darts out with a stick full of knobs, takes us by the cowl, throws us down in the snow, and beats us till we are quite covered with bruises, if we bear all this ill usage with joy, with the thought that we ought to participate in the sufferings of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; note this, and note it carefully, that this is for a Friar Minor, the subject of a true and perfect joy.

"Now hear the conclusion of all this. Amongst all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which Jesus Christ has granted, and will grant to His servants, the most considerable is, that of conquering oneself, and of suffering pain and opprobrium for the love of God, in order to respond to the love He has for us. In all the miraculous gifts which I have noticed, there is not one from which we may derive so much glory, we have no share in it, it is all from God, we only receive what He gives us, and, as St. Paul says: 'If thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?' (99) But we have our share in the tribulations which we suffer for the love of God, and we may make it a subject of glory, as the same apostle who said: 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" (100)

St. Francis was far from thinking that we may glory in our sufferings, as of a favour which we have not received, since he acknowledges that it

(99) 1 Cor. iv. 7. (100) Gal. iv. 14.

is the greatest gift of the Holy Ghost, conformably to what St. Paul said to the Philippians: "To you is given not only to believe in Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for His sake;" (101) and to what is written of the apostles! "And they, indeed, went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (102) He only proposed to say that our sole cause of glory is, that God permits us to be associated to the cross of Jesus Christ, in which alone we are glorified. Thus it is to God that he refers all the glory of our sufferings, which indeed is His, since without the aid of His grace we should not suffer as we ought, and without the cross of Jesus Christ we should have no merit. But he correctly says, and he speaks the true orthodox faith, when he adds, that we have a share in the merit of what we suffer, and when he draws the distinction between that and miraculous gifts. St. Chrysostom has spoken in the same manner, and says that our virtues are in so far the gifts of God, that they are also merits of our will, for which God has been pleased to render Himself indebted to us, by the promise He has made to reward them. (103)

May the tender and generous love of St. Francis, which we have endeavoured to pourtray, excite all those who shall read his life to love God and to manifest their love, not only by their actions, but by their patience in adversities. May they

(101) Phil. i. 29. (102) Acts v. 41

(103) S. Chry. Homil. 4, in cap. i. Epist. ad Philip. ver. 29.

love Him, so as to be enabled to say with the same saint, "May the mild violence, O Lord, of Thy ardent love separate me from all that is beneath the heavens, and wholly absorb me." And with St. Austin: "O my God, I love Thee with an ardent love. If I do not as yet love Thee enough, compel me to love Thee still more. O love, which ever burns without ever being extinguished! my God, who art nothing but charity, inflame me. (104) Jesus Christ, in speaking of His love, (105) said: "I am come to send fire on the earth, (106) and what will I but that it be kindled?" The holy Catholic Church, our mother, uses all her efforts to kindle it in the hearts of her children; she never ceases repeating to them that the greatest commandment of the Christian religion (107) is the first, and this is it: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." She sets before them every argument which may induce them to its perfect observance; and when she represents to them the severity of God's judgments, the rigour of the pains of hell, it is to lead them to this love, through fear, as God Himself does, which St. Augustine declares in the following terms: "Lord

(104) S. Aug. Confess. lib. 13, cap. viii. and lib. 10, cap. xxix.

(105) Although these words are usually understood as of the fire of Divine love, some interpreters think that they signify the fire of the persecutions which were to be enkindled at the publication of the Gospel If that be so, it may be said that one fire communicated itself to the other; for it was requisite to have an ardent love of God to be able to endure the persecution.

(106) Luke xii. 49.

(107) Math. xxii. 38. Deut. vi. 5. Luke x. 27.

Thou commandest me to love Thee, and if I fail to do so Thy wrath is enkindled against me, and Thou threatenest me with frightful misery, as if it were not one sufficiently great not to love Thee." (108)

After this, who will not feel the greatest indignation against those, who, by the blackest of all calumnies, have dared to say, and to put in writing that the head of the church, and the body of bishops, had abolished the grand precept of the love of God, and have given to their own sect the glory of maintaining it. The Lord said to the sinner by His prophet: "Why dost thou declare my justices? and take my covenant in thy mouth?" (109) A similar reproach may be made to this sort of sinner, who, according to the oracle (110) of the Son of God, are already condemned, because they do not believe: "Why speakest thou of the love of God, thou who has it not, and cannot have it, because thy rebellion against the legitimate authority established by Jesus Christ, has caused thee to lose thy faith, without which that divine love cannot be entertained, that supernatural and divine charity, 'which is spread over our hearts by the Holy Ghost.'"(111) Listen to the Church, submit with humble docility to her decisions, and you will learn from herself what your conscience has already made known to you, that she teaches her children to have a pure faith, a wholesome faith, which has nothing false in it,

(108) S. Aug. Confess. lib. I, cap. v.

(109) Psalm xlix. 17. (110) John iii. 18.

(111) Rom. v. 5. Tit. i. 15. 1 Tim. i. 5. Coloss. i. 23. Gal. v. 6.

which is firm and immoveable, and is at the same time a faith acting and perfected by charity. This is the reason she so often lays before them the example of the saints, who had an inviolable attachment to that faith, and who were inflamed with the love of God as St. Francis was."

The mystery of the Incarnate Word, "that great mystery of piety, which has been manifested in the flesh,"(112) produced in his heart sentiments so pious and so tender, that they were observable exteriorly by actions of extraordinary fervour, as we saw in the grand solemnity which he celebrated at Grecia on Christmas night. "Consider," he says, "in his letters, that the most high Father has sent from heaven His archangel St. Gabriel, to announce that His most worthy, holy, and glorious Word should descend into the womb of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. And, in truth, He did so descend, and took from her true human flesh, passible and mortal, such as ours is; "being rich, He became of His own accord poor."(113) He chose by preference poverty in this world, for Himself and for His Blessed Mother. He gave Himself thus to us, in conformity to the will of His Father, to wipe away our sins on the cross, by the sacrifice of His Blood, and to leave an example for us to follow in His traces, (114) for it is His wish (115) that we should all be saved through Him; but there are few who

(112) 2 Tim. iii. 16.

(113) 2 Cor. viii. 9. (114) 1 Pet. ii. 21.

(115) Saint Francis, who was truly Catholic, expresses himself on dogmatical points with all the precision of the language of the Church.

desire the salvation He proffers them, although His yoke is sweet, and His burthen light.'(116)

When he spoke of the Incarnation and Birth of the Son of God, it was with affectionate devotion; he could not hear the words, "the Word made flesh," without manifesting great joy. The religious of a monastery where he was one day, remarked this emotion, and took occasion to ask him if it was right to eat meat on Christmas day, when it fell on a Friday, or if it was not better to abstain from it. "Not only do I think," he replied, "that men may eat meat on this day, in which the Word was made flesh, but I wish that princes and rich persons would throw meat and corn in the highways, in order that the birds and beasts of the field should rejoice, in their way, in the joys of so great a festival: I wish even that some was placed on the walls, if they could derive sweetness from it."

He says that Jesus Christ desires that we should all be saved through Him; Saint Paul also declares that "He will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4. This is what is noticed in many other parts of the New Testament, and what all the Holy Fathers, whether Greek or Latin, have constantly taught. "God," says S. Augustin, "desires that all men shall be saved: not so, however, that they shall be deprived of free will; it is on the good or ill use they make of this that God most justly punishes or rewards them. Lib. de Spir. et litt. cap. xxxiii. Finally, every Catholic is bound to believe the three following truths which are defined by the Church: 1st, That God desires that he should be saved, and that Jesus Christ has shed all His blood for this object. 2ndly, That as this His desire is sincere, He consequently gives him the graces necessary for his salvation. 3rdly, That He is not the first to abandon those who have been once justified by His grace. This is a powerful motive to induce us to labour with confidence for our salvation; and altogether with fear and trembling to have recourse to prayer, because we may be the first to abandon God, in which case He may cast us off and damn us eternally. Concil. Arausic. secundum cap. xxv. Const. Innocentii 10. adv. Lib. Jansenii. Concil. Trid. sess. 6. cap. xxi.

(116) Math. xi. 30.

We see plainly that these are hyperbolical expressions flowing from his heart, by the emotions of his spiritual joy, by which he was actuated; but in saying that men might eat meat on Christmas day, although it fall on a Friday, he speaks in conformity with the usage of the Church, which, however, is a permission, and not a law. Pope Honorius III. (117) pointed it out clearly to the bishop of Prague, in Bohemia, in the following rescript of the year 1222: "We answer, that when the feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Lord falls on a Friday, those who are not under the obligation of abstinence by a vow, or by a regular observance (118) may eat meat on that day, because of the excellence of the festival, according to the custom of the universal Church. Those, however, who abstain on that day from devotion, are not to be censured."

St. Francis was, moreover, much affected by the goodness of our Saviour, who, after His baptism, went into the desert, and there fasted forty days and forty nights, without eating anything during that time, for the expiation of our sensuality, and to set us an example of fasting. (119) He honoured this holy retreat by a fast of forty days, which he commenced on the seventh day of January, and which he passed in some solitary place, confined to his cell, keeping strict absti-

(117) Decret. lib. iii. tit 46, cap. Explicari.

(118) On this principle, the Friars Minors who, by their Rule, are obliged to fast on all the Fridays of the year, are not exempted from it in those years in which Christmas Day falls on a Friday.

(119) Math. iv. 1 and 2. Luke iv. 2.

nence in fasting and drinking, and employing himself solely in praising God and in prayer. It was also during this Lent that he received the most signal favours from Jesus Christ.

His soul was penetrated with ardour for the mystery of the sacred Body and Blood of our Lord. The work of so tender a love, and of such condescending goodness, threw him into an excess of admiration, and put him quite beside himself. He communicated frequently, and with so much devotion that it inspired others with similar feelings; they saw him almost always after having communicated, as if in a spiritual intoxication, and raised into ecstasy by the sweetness he tasted in partaking of the body and blood of the Lamb without spot. At mass, when at the elevation, he said this prayer: "Celestial Father, my Lord and my God, cast Thine eyes on the glorious countenance of Thy Christ, and have pity on me, and on other sinners, for whom Thy beloved Son, our Lord, has condescended to die, and who has chosen to remain with us in the sacrament of the altar, for our salvation and consolation; and with Thee, Eternal Father, and the Holy Ghost, sole God, livest and reignest to everlasting ages, Amen."

The profound veneration which is due to the august mystery of the Eucharist, the solicitude which we ought to have to hear mass, to approach to the sacred altar, and to prepare ourselves in order worthily to communicate, were points on which he used to dilate in his conversations, in his instructions, and in his letters.

As faith in the real presence is the principle of the worship which is due to Jesus Christ, under the sacred symbols, he supported it, arguing with the heretics, who sought to controvert it: "O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (120) Why do you not admit the truth, and why do you not believe the Son of God? He Himself assures us, He the most High, that what is consecrated at the altar by the hands of the priest, is His most holy body, and His most holy blood, since He says: "This is my Body, this is my Blood of the New Testament. He who eats my Flesh, and drinks my Blood, has eternal life." (121) What He has said, that He does. Every day from the height of His throne he comes to us under mean species; as He debased Himself in descending into the womb of the Blessed Virgin. Every day (122) He descends from the bosom of His Father on the altar, into the hands of the priest. As He showed Himself to the holy apostles, in true flesh, so He shows Himself to us in the consecrated bread. In seeing Him with the eyes of their body, they considered Him with the eyes of faith, and believed that He was their Lord and their God. We also, in sensibly seeing the species of bread and of wine, must firmly believe that it is His most holy Body, and His most holy Blood, living and true. In this way He is always

(120) Psalm iv. 3. (121) Math. xxvi. 26 and 28.

(122) Mass then was said every day in Saint Francis' time, which it is necessary to notice in consequence of the abuse which the heretics have made of the letter, which we will give further on.

with the faithful, according to what He said: "Behold, (123) I am with you all days, even to the consummation of ages. (124) Those who saw our blessed Lord in His human nature, and did not believe Him to be the Son of God, are condemned, (125) and those who see the bread and wine consecrated by a priest, and do not believe

(123) This is one of the meanings in which this passage may be read for Jesus Christ is at all times with the faithful by His real presence in the mystery of the Eucharist, this Sacrament being preserved in the Tabernacles, and that our Lord is there as long as the elements continue; as the Council of Trent has defined, anathematizing all such as shall assert the contrary. Sess. 13. can. 4. But the literal sense of these words: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world," is the promise which Jesus Christ makes to give to the Apostles and their successors, all the aid they may require for the fulfilment of their ministry, and to be always the invisible Head of the Church; which proves its perpetuity. He will continue to the end of the world, and it will see all the heretical sects extinguished one after the other. The continual assistance of Jesus Christ renders the Church also infallible in what she proposes to our belief and in what she rejects. Finally, the Church, dispersed over all the earth, has the same infallibility as the Church assembled in Council, since without that, it would not be true that Jesus Christ, according to His word, would be with her at all times, all days, omnibus diebus. These are orthodox truths, to which can only be opposed heresies and those crafty evasions which emanate from the spirit of error.

(124) Math. xxviii. 20.

(125) Those who have died in their incredulity, because it was voluntary and criminal. Saint Augustin says, that Jesus Christ, by His actions and by His words, has always intended to impress upon mankind that He was God and Man; and it is to this passage in S. John that he refers: "Non poterant credere, They could not believe;" he replies: "Quare non poterant, si a me quæratur, cito respondeo, quia nolebant; malam quippe earum voluntatem prævidit Deus." "If I am asked why they could not believe? I reply immediately, because they did not choose to believe, and God had foreseen their evil inclination." The same holy doctor says, in speaking of heretics in another place, "Multum errant, quoniam superbi sunt, et non possunt discere quia nolunt credere" "They fall into grievous errors, because they are proud, and they cannot learn because they wont believe." The heretics of our days, are quite like those of old times. John xii. 39. S. Aug. Tract. 28, n. 1, and Tract. 53, n. 6, in Joan. De Agon. Christ. cap. xv.

it to be truly the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are likewise condemned. (126)

We see from this argument that St. Francis knew how to oppose heretics, and defend the orthodox truths; for what stronger proof can there be of the dogma of the real presence, than the very words which the Son of God made use of at the institution of the mystery of the Eucharist. Words which are clear and precise, recorded by the Evangelists, and by St. Paul, which were susceptible of no figurative sense in the circumstances under which they were spoken, and which the Church, which is guided by His Spirit, has always understood in their proper and natural sense; it is the unanswerable argument, which all the controversialists have employed against the sacramentarians, and which is the stronger from the futile answers by which it has been met.

The life of the holy man has furnished many examples of the ardent and respectful zeal which animated him in all that regarded churches, or altars, or all the things which were used for the Sacrifice of the Mass, and for the divine service. As he could not bear anything dirty, or slovenly, in the country churches, he took the trouble of cleaning everything himself; and lest they should want altar breads, for masses, he made them

(126) Jesus Christ says: "He who believes not is already condemned. What is the condemnation of those, of whom St. Paul speaks, who have received the faith and professed it, have swerved from it and fallen off, and have been wrecked as regards faith, from the love of novelty, by an obstinate resistance to the authority of the Church? Tim. vi. 10. and 21, and cap. i. 19. John iii. 18.

himself, in iron forms, which were made in a very workman-like manner, which he took into the poor parishes ; some of these moulds are carefully preserved in the convent of Grecio.

The peculiar respect that he had for priests is seen in the expressions he made use of to manifest it on all occasions, and which we have already noticed ; we shall only add what he one day said : "We have been called by the Lord to aid the prelates and clergy of the holy Church, in the work of faith. For which reason we are obliged to love them, and to treat them with every possible honour. Moreover, the Friars Minors only bear the name of Minors, that they may be such in fact, and the most humble of men. Besides, from the commencement of my conversion, God having inspired the bishop of Assisi to give me some very sage advice, and to encourage me in the service of Jesus Christ, I, for that reason, and many others, grounded on the excellence of the Episcopal dignity, am determined to love and revere the bishops, and to look upon them as my Lords ; and not only them, but even the poorest of the priests."

And here is the place to put on record the celebrated letter he addressed to the Religious of his Order, and particularly to the priests, it will show better than anything else, the profound veneration he had for the mysteries of the Eucharist.

TO ALL THE REVEREND AND VERY AMIABLE BRETHREN, TO THE MINISTER-GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF MINORS, HIS LORD, AND HIS MASTER; TO ALL THE MINISTERS-

GENERAL WHO WILL, AS SUCH, SUCCEED HIM; TO ALL THE PROVINCIALS AND CUSTODES; TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THIS FRATERNAL CONGREGATION, WHO IMITATE THE HUMILITY OF JESUS CHRIST; AND TO ALL THOSE WHO LIVE IN SIMPLICITY AND OBEDIENCE, THE FIRST AND THE LAST; BROTHER FRANCIS, A VILE AND INFIRM MAN, THEIR LITTLE SERVANT, SALUTES THEM, IN HIM, WHO HAS REDEEMED US, AND HAS WASHED AWAY OUR SINS IN HIS BLOOD.(127) JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD, WHOSE NAME IS THE MOST HIGH, SON OF GOD, BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN.

"Now listen to me all you who are my masters, my children, and my brethren. What I have to say to you is to open the ears of your hearts to the voice of the Son of God, and to obey Him. Keep, with all your heart, His commandments, and practise His counsels in a spirit of perfection. 'Praise Him because He is good, and glorify Him by your works.'(128) The Lord our God presents Himself to us, as to His children; for which reason, my brethren, I conjure you all, with all the charity I am master of, and kissing your feet, to treat, with all manner of respect and honour, the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, by 'which we have been reconciled to God the Father Almighty,(129) and peace has been established both on earth and in heaven.'(130) I also entreat, by our Lord, all my brethren who are Priests, as well as those who aspire to the priesthood, and who will be admitted into it, that every

(127) Apoc. i. 5, and v. 9.
(128) Psalm cxxxv. 1. Tob. xiii. 6.
(129) Rom. v. 11. (130) Coloss. i. 20.

time they propose to celebrate Mass, they may do so with purity of conscience; and in a pure manner, that they may offer the true sacrifice(131) of the most sacred Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with profound veneration, with holy intentions, without any interested views, without being led to it by any fear of displeasing, or wish to please any one; but may all your will be solely directed, according to the grace which Almighty God will grant you, to that same great God to whom alone you must desire to be pleasing, because it is He alone who(132) operates in this sacrifice as He pleases, according to what He has said: 'Do this in memory of me.'(133) Were any one to act otherwise, he becomes a traitor and a Judas.

"My brethren, who are Priests, remember that it is written in the law of Moses, that, by command of the Lord, the transgressors were put to death, although they had only been wanting in exterior

(131) These words of Saint Francis, written more than five hundred years ago, were an anticipated condemnation of the following error: "That the Mass is only a commemorative and representative Sacrifice, a representation only of that of the Cross and a memorial of the immolation of Jesus Christ; that Jesus Christ offers Himself merely in figure; that it is not on the real presence that the idea of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is founded; that the Anglicans might admit the same sacrifice that we do in the celebration of the Eucharist, even in rejecting the dogma of the real presence," &c.

(132) Although the Priests consecrate at Mass, it is nevertheless true that Jesus Christ solely operates, because it is only the Almighty power which can effect the miracle of the transubstantiation at the words of the Priest, as He pledged Himself to do, when He said: "Do this in memory of Me." It is one of the proofs of the opinion of the school of Scotus, who maintained that the Sacraments are the causes, not physical, but moral and instrumental, of the grace which they confer, which does preven their being the true, certain, and infallible causes thereof. This opinion is much adopted by Theologians. See Du Hamel, Theol. tom. 6, De Effect. Sacram. Toornely De Sacram. in genere, quæst, 3.

(133) Luke xxii. 19.

ceremonies. 'What much more rigorous punishments do you not think he deserves who shall have trampled under his feet the Son of God; who shall have treated as an unclean thing the blood of the Alliance, by which he has been sanctified, and shall have thus outraged the spirit of grace?'(134) For a man who is defiled treats with contempt, and tramples under foot, the law of God, since, as the Apostle says, he eats unworthily, without discerning this holy bread, which is Jesus Christ, from other meats, and mingles it with unearthly actions.(135) Nevertheless, the Lord declares by the mouth of a Prophet, 'that he who does the work of God negligently, or deceitfully,(136) is accursed.'(137) And it is on account of the Priests who do not choose to consider these truths seriously, that He lets fall on us all the judgments recorded elsewhere. 'I will curse your blessings.'(138)

"Listen attentively to what I say, my brethren. If we venerate, as in right we should, the Blessed Virgin Mary, because she bore in her holy womb the Son of God; if St. John Baptist trembled in approaching Jesus Christ, and did not dare to

(134) Exod. xii. 15 and 19. Lev. xvii. 14. Num. ix. 10. Heb. x. 29.

(135) 1 Cor. xi. 29.

(136) The expression of the Vulgate is *fraudulenter*, that of the Septuagint is *negligenter*: Saint Francis notices them both, which shows that he read the Scriptures very attentively, and took notice of the different versions. He means to say that whoever communicates unworthily is a deceiver and a cheat, who insults Jesus Christ while affecting to love Him, as Judas who betrayed Him with a kiss. Osculo filium hominis tradis? Luke xxii. 48.

(137) Jerem. xlviii. 10.

(138) Malach. ii. 2.

touch the crown of His head(139) to baptize Him; if the sepulchre, in which He was laid for some time, inspires so much respect: what justice, what sanctity, what merit ought he not to have who touches Him with his hands, no longer in a mortal state, but immortal and glorious, in such state as 'the angels desire more and more to see Him in.'(140)

"My brethren, who are Priests, consider what is your high dignity, and be ye holy, because the Lord is holy.(141) Because, in confiding this mystery to you, He has honoured you above all the others, love Him also, respect Him, honour Him in the same mystery.(142) When you have Jesus Christ present in so marvellous a manner, if there be anything else in the world that occupies your thoughts, it must be admitted that it is a great misery, and a deplorable weakness. All the world should be in astonishment, every one should tremble, and the heavens should rejoice, when Christ, the Son of the living God, is on the altar in the hands of the Priest. O admirable grandeur! O surprising goodness! O humble excellence! that the Sovereign of the Universe, God, and the Son of God, should debase Himself to such a degree, as to hide Himself, for our sal-

(139) Saint Bernard says likewise of Saint John Baptist, who baptized our Saviour, plunged in the water, holding his hand on His head: "Fremit ille: quid mirum si fremit homo, nec audet attingere sanctum Dei verticem, caput adorandum Angelis, reverendum Potestatibus, tremendum Principalibus? Serm. 1, in Epiphan. n. 6.

(140) Peter i. 12. (141) Levit. xi. 44.

(142) We find similar thoughts in the books on the Priesthood, and in many of S. Chrysostom's homilies. He may have read these works, and he was animated with the same views as that holy Doctor.

vation, under the humble species of bread. Reflect seriously, my brethren, on the debasement of a God; open your hearts in His presence, humble yourselves before Him, in order that He may raise you up; retain nothing within you of yourselves, in order that He may give Himself wholly to you, and receive from you all that you are.(143)

"I also warn my brethren, and I exhort them in our Lord, that in the places in which they dwell only one Mass be celebrated each day, and that it be celebrated according to the Ritual of the Roman Church. If there should be many Priests then, let this be observed notwithstanding. By a love of charity, let one Priest be satisfied with hearing the Mass of another, because our Saviour Jesus Christ fills with His grace those present and absent, who are worthy of it. Although He is in many places, He is ever the same, indivisible and impassible; and He associates, according to His good pleasure, the only true God and Lord, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen."

Melancthon(144) availed himself of the last article of this letter,(145) in support of his error on

(143) In this sense Saint Augustin says, "that he who approaches to the Holy Table, where he receives the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ who died for us, should be ready to give his also, either for the faith or for his brethren. Tract. 47 in Joan. n. 2.

(144) Melanct. apol. conf. Aug. art de Mis.—Bellarm. de Missa. lib. 2. cap. 9 et 10. Bona. de Reb. liturg. lib. 1. cap. 14.

(145) Eckius has denied that Saint Francis was its author. Cardinal Bellarmin, and Possevin had doubts on the subject;—but the whole Order have recognised it as his, and Wading has given solid proofs of it.

private Masses, which he pretended were contrary to the institution of Jesus Christ. Cardinals Bellarmine and Bona have clearly demonstrated that the use of these masses has been found to be established from the beginning of the Church; and the very expressions of this letter show that St. Francis was far from finding them to be wrong. He says, "I warn and exhort my brethren to celebrate only one mass." If he had thought tha to celebrate many was acting contrary to the intention which Jesus Christ had in instituting the mystery, he should have said: "I order that only one mass shall be celebrated, and I forbid the celebration of many;" and undoubtedly he would have said so, he who was so careful to conform in everything to the Gospel, and who in his capacity of founder and general of his order, had a right to command and to forbid. Moreover, he knew that his brethren, who were priests, had a right, as all others, to say mass when they pleased, since he says in the same letter, "Whenever they say mass, let them say it with purity of conscience." It was only, then, an advice which he gave them, not to make use of this liberty, for reasons which we shall presently explain. In fine, we have seen in his life that he had mass said in his room when he was sick, a proof that he did not think this

Others have thought that he only spoke of the common Mass, called Conventual, or of the Mass of Maunday Thursday, and some have been of opinion that he had thought that, according to the usage of the Roman Church, only one mass ought to be said where there were many Priests: all that is erroneous and without any foundation. Eckius, in Enchirid. Bellarm. supra. Possev. in Appar. sac. Wad. in Epist. 12. s. Franc. Bona. De Reb. Liturg. suprà.

custom very contrary to the intention of Jesus Christ, and he assuredly did not believe it to be so, since by the admission of the heretics and critics, it was a common practice in his time; his faith was too pure and too firm for him to have thought that the Holy Roman Church would either do or approve of anything contrary to the intention of our Saviour. Thus it is calumniously that the sectarians have quoted him; his letter alone convicts them of what is false. (146)

A recent author has mentioned it as a remains of the ancient discipline of the Church, (147) according to which, he assumes that private masses were not said in the first ages of the Church. But in the first place there is not a single word in the letter of St. Francis, which can even lead one to suspect that he meant to revive the primitive discipline. 2. The Catholic doctors have proved in answer to the heretics of the latter ages, that the custom of saying private masses is of the remotest antiquity, and that the Church never made any law to prevent their being celebrated. 3. That whether these masses were celebrated

(146) The Spanish Inquisitors should not have attached this note to it—Cauté lege, in the Catalogue of books which are to be read with precaution. which was published in 1612, and Wading should not have approved of that note, nor of the use which has been made of it in some of the editions of the Bibliothèque des Pères. All that ought to have been noticed, is, that the Heretics had made a bad use of it, without any good reason. Wading, suprà.

(147) It is in a small work of an anonymous, but well-known author entitled: "Lettre sur l'Ancienne Discipline de l'Eglise, touchant la célébration de la Messe, qui peut servir de supplement au nouveau Traité des dispositions pour les saints mystères." The author of this treatise is also that of the treatise De la Prière Publique, and has made himself but too well known. The letter was printed at Paris in 1708, by Ammonneville.

more or less frequently in the first ages, in different places, it is certain, and the author admits it, that the practice is very praiseworthy and very holy, that it is approved by the Church, and that the priests may celebrate it daily, provided their intentions are pure, and their dispositions holy. After this, of what use can his book be ?(148)

We must now examine what the holy patriarch's motive was, for exhorting his brethren to have only one mass said daily in the houses of his order.

Some persons think that, as he had a great leaning towards a life of solitude, the greatest number of his houses were then in solitary places; it was his wish that strangers should not come to them frequently ; and that, not to attract them by a number of masses, he advised his brethren to have but one said daily. Formerly, they were so cautious not to disturb the quiet of the servants of God in their monasteries, that Pope St. Gregory, (149) in accordance with his predecessor Pelagius, forbid the bishops from celebrating solemn mass in them ; and in the Council of

(148) He hypercritically denies the facts asserted by the Catholic Doctors to prove the ancient custom of celebrating private masses ; by this he gives support to the Heretics. He favors also the indolence and indevotion of those Priests who pass whole years without saying mass, and without bringing themselves into the frame of mind to be able to say it; and gives room to irreligious persons to censure the present measures of the Church, as if she were not equally prudent in all ages. The letter, moreover, contains many rash and indiscreet things, adverse to piety, and calculated to scandalize the faithful. When persons choose to write on these subjects, they ought to do so in Latin, with great circumspection and in a Catholic spirit.

(149) S. Greg. Regist. lib. Epist. 46, et in not. edit. nov. Concil. Later. 1. Can. 17. Bona. de Reb. Lit. lib. 1. cap. xiii. and xviii.

Lateran, under Calixtus II., it was forbidden to the abbots and monks to celebrate mass publicly, that is, to admit seculars into their churches when they celebrated. St. Francis may have intended to have kept his brethren in a state of recollection by the same means.

Nevertheless, his letter shows that he had another motive. Enlightened by the most vivid rays of that light of faith and intelligence, which the Holy Ghost sheds on pure minds, he reflected on the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who comes to place Himself on the altar, in the hands of the priest, under the humble species, struck him with such astonishment, that it was not possible for him to express himself, but by rapture and exclamations. He represented to himself the sublime dignity of priests, the honour they have, far above that of the angels, the eminent sanctity which their character requires, the enormity of the crime of celebrating in a state of sin, and the horror of the punishment it deserves. Full of these thoughts, he informed the priests of his order that they ought to feel annihilated in considering the debasement of the Son of God, in the Sacrifice of the Mass, open their hearts in His presence, and in return for His giving Himself wholly to them, give themselves so entirely to Him, that they should keep nothing of themselves back. And he immediately adds: "I also warn my brethren, and exhort them to celebrate but one mass daily, in the places in which they dwell; and if there should be many priests there, let them be satisfied

in observing this ; and for the love of charity let them be contented with hearing this one mass." It is evident that this warning and this exhortation had their source in the fear he entertained that human frailty might hinder them from being every day in a sufficiently holy state, such as he wished them to be to say mass.

We may, moreover, remark, that he endeavoured to impress them with similar sentiments to his own, which had prevented his taking priest's orders. Mark (150) of Lisbon observes, that being seriously pressed to take orders, he had recourse to prayer, in order to learn the will of God on the subject ; that an angel appeared to him holding a vase full of a very clear liquor, and said to him : "Francis, look at this ; he who would administer the most Blessed Sacrament, must be as pure as this liquor." Upon which the humble servant of God, resolved to continue for the remainder of his life in deacon's orders. In the same sentiment he exhorted his brethren, who were in priest's orders, to humble themselves in the exercise of their holy ministry, in acknowledgment of their unworthiness, by refraining from saying mass daily, as they might.

Now there are four things deserving of especial notice in this letter, in order to have it perfectly understood, and in order not to draw consequences from it not in accordance with his intentions.

1. In consequence of his exhorting his brethren

(150) In the first book of the Chronicles of the Friars Minors, chapter lii. Wading does not mention this circumstance, either through inadvertence or from not having found it in the manuscripts he had seen.

not to celebrate mass daily, it must not be concluded that he wished them to celebrate unfrequently. There were then but few priests in the order; the number was very limited in each house, and he wished them to say their masses daily alternately; therefore no one among them could be many days without celebrating. Such, consequently, who say their masses but seldom, cannot shield themselves under the authority of the doctrine of St. Francis. The Council of Trent is not in their favour; it directs the bishops to take care that the priests who have not the care of souls shall say mass at least on all Sundays and solemn festival days.(151) The primitive Church will also not justify their conduct, for the priests who did not say their mass in private, assisted at the bishop's mass, and received the communion from his hands; those, on the contrary, of whom we are speaking, keep away from the Holy Communion, as well as from the altar; they are, nevertheless, aware that this estrangement has been blamed by the holy fathers, who have always exhorted the faithful to frequent communion; that Jesus Christ has given us His Body to be the usual nourishment of our souls; that the primitive Christians received it daily; that at the close of the fourth century it was still the custom at Rome, in Spain, and in Africa, according to the testimony of St. Jerome and St. Augustin; (152) that the Church in the

(151) Conc. Trid. sess. 23. cap xiv.

(152) S. Hier. Epist. ad Pammach. pro libris suis, et Epist. ad Lucin. S. August. Epist. 54 alias 118 ad Januar. et lib. 2 de serm. Dom. in monte, cap. vii. Conc. Triden. sess. 13. cap. vi. et sess. 23 cap. vi.

Council of Trent conjures her children, by the bowels of the mercy of God, to have sufficient piety to receive frequently the celestial bread, and that it was her wish that at every mass, all those who assisted at it should communicate, not only spiritually, and by an interior sentiment of devotion, but by the sacramental reception of the Holy Eucharist, in order more efficaciously to participate of the fruits of the holy sacrifice. The custom of receiving but seldom arises from an erroneous principle, which tends to abolish the use of the Sacraments; or from an extreme attachment to sin, which brings about a contempt of the heavenly nourishment, or a state of tepidity and supineness, ending in disgust.

2. It cannot be doubted but that St. Francis had similar feelings of reverence, fear, and humility for the Holy Communion, to those with which he endeavoured to inspire his brethren in respect to the Sacrifice of the Mass. Nevertheless, the love he bore it was predominant in his heart. St. Bonaventure says that he was a frequent communicant, (153) and we see in his letters that he exhorted all to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. He would therefore have approved of his brethren celebrating frequently, and even daily, by an ardent desire to unite themselves to Jesus Christ. St Augustine, speaking of two men,(154) one of whom, to honour Jesus Christ, did not dare pass a single day without communicating, and the other, who, from a similar motive, did not dare

(153) S. Bonav. leg. S. Fran. cap. ix.

(154) S. Aug. suprà. Epist. 54.

communicate daily, decided that they both did him honour; the one like Zacheus who ran joyfully to his house to receive Him; and the other, like the centurion, who from humility did not deem himself worthy to receive Him into his house; we see clearly in this, that it was not upon the custom of seldom or frequently communicating, but upon the more or less frequent communions that his approval was given. St. Thomas, (155) who is of the same opinion, does not hesitate to say that the love which induces an approach to the Sacrament is preferable to the fear which keeps a person away from it, because all the Holy Scripture excites us to love; this was also the opinion of St. Augustine, (156) since he says in the same place that the Body of the Lord is the remedy which we ought daily to have recourse to, when we are not unworthy of it; and in another place, addressing himself to those who had been recently baptized: "You should know what you have received, what you will receive, and what you ought to receive daily. This bread which you see on the altar, which is consecrated by the word of God, (157) is the Body of Jesus Christ."

(155) 3a. Part. quæst. 80. art 10 ad tertium.

(156) S. August. serm. 227, ed. nov.

(157) It must be noticed that he attributes the consecration to the Divine Word only, and not to the prayer or invocation. Not but that the prayer or invocation is made at the Sacrifice of the Mass to beg of God the admirable change which is there made; and in this sense, it may have been said that it contributes to the consecration; but it does not follow from it that it effectively operates it, nor that it is an essential part of the form which consecrates. The passages of the Holy Fathers are too precise on that head; they declare that the bread only becomes the Body of Jesus Christ, by the very words of Jesus Christ pronounced by the Priest.

On this principle the grandeur of the mystery, and the consideration of our baseness, may sometimes prevent a priest from celebrating, and a layman from communicating; but love ought to give them confidence, and prevail on them to approach the Holy Table. "The peculiar quality of those who ardently love," says St. Chrysostom,(158) "is to desire to be one with that which they love. Jesus Christ, wishing to testify to us the ardour of the love He has for us, has united His body to us so strictly, that we are altogether one with Him, as the members are one body joined to the head." "After having received the marks of a love so intense," continues the holy Doctor,(159) "let us not remain insensible; let us approach the sacred Table with fervour, with greater eagerness than infants do the breast of their nurses; and let the most grievous of our disappointments be the privation of this celestial nourishment. Those who are long deprived of it, and who feel no regret at the privation, and who are not excited to wish for this aliment, do not respond to the love which Jesus Christ bears them—they love Him not, since they do not desire to be united to Him—and in thus refusing to receive Him, they do not honour Him, for it is to this mystery of love that the words of St. Austin are appropriately applied: "Nec colitur nisi amando." (160) He is only honoured by loving Him; He only considers Himself honoured by love.

(158) S. Chrys. Homil. 45 in Joan.

(159) S. Chrys. Homil. 83 in Math.

(160) S. Aug. Epist. 140 ad Honor. alias 120, cap. xviii.

3. When St. Francis advised his brethren to celebrate one mass a day in the houses of his order, they were for the greater part situated in remote places, to which people seldom came. Now they are almost in every town; the Friars Minors having been called into them for the service of their neighbour, which requires that many masses shall be said in them. The Council of Trent desires that priests who have the care of souls, shall celebrate as often as it may be necessary to satisfy their obligations.(161) It is here that the religious, who are devoted to aid the pastors, are under the necessity of celebrating frequently. Their holy patriarch, who had an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls, as we have seen, and we shall have other opportunities of noticing, would doubtless have consented, that for the edification of the public, they should have bent to this exigence; he would even have recommended them to conform to the usage in future times, had he foreseen that the heretics would have condemned it, as contrary to the intention of Jesus Christ, and that they would have endeavoured to deprive the faithful of the consolation of hearing mass, and communicating. His faith, which was pure and active, would not have permitted that error should avail itself of an advice which he had given upon grounds of piety, in the bosom of the Catholic Church. But if the spiritual advantage of their neighbour is a motive, which may induce the Friars Minors to say masses frequently, and even daily, this engagement should

(161) Conc. Trid. sess. 23. cap. xiv.

cause them to have this letter of St. Francis frequently before them, in order to be brought to live with that purity which he inculcates, so that they may never celebrate but with fervour and love, joined to deep reverence, and that one mass for them may serve as a preparation for the next. If at times they may find themselves less disposed for this solemn act, it is then that they must literally follow the advice of their Father, and abstain from celebrating, purifying themselves by penance, and by this means bring themselves into a frame of mind to return promptly to the altar with an increase of love, of desire, and of faithfulness.

4. St. Francis was desirous that such of his brethren who were priests, should be pure and holy, that they should celebrate the sacred Mysteries with great purity, and should expand their hearts in presence of the Son of God, giving themselves wholly to Him without retaining any part for themselves. St. Chrysostom says,(162) that there is no purity and sanctity greater than that which ought to be in the breast of a priest when he offers the awful and tremendous sacrifice ; he ought to have as much as if he was in Heaven amidst the celestial powers ; and speaking of the holy communion, he exclaims : " Who then ought to be more pure than he who is permitted to participate in such a sacrifice ? What ray of the sun is not inferior in splendour to his hand, his mouth, his tongue ?" St. Augustine(163) feared entering

(162) S. Chrys. de Sacerd. lib. 3. n. 4, et lib. 6. n. 4. Id. Homil. 83 in Matth.

(163) S. Aug. Epist. 21, alias 148. Id. Tract. 26 in Joan.

the priesthood, he found it difficult to perform its functions well, he wept during his ordination; he said that sanctity was the true characteristic of priests; and this is what he addressed to the faithful on the subject of communion: "Be careful, my brethren, of what you do; eat this celestial bread spiritually; take innocence to the altar at which you receive it."

In the last century, some disingenuous persons, whose noxious doctrine still exercises the patience of the Church, pretended(164) that these sublime dispositions were absolutely necessary for communicants, and that it was proper to abstain from celebrating or communicating, till the perfection designated had been acquired. They sheltered themselves under the specious pretexts of striving to attain it by penitential exercises; but it was like those of whom S. Ambrose says,(165) that their penance consisted in abstaining from the

(164) The celebrated work on Frequent Communion, was only written to deter the faithful from communicating, under the specious pretext of not having the perfection, which the author pretends to have been required by the Holy Fathers, as a necessary preliminary disposition. But besides this opinion, which is false and dangerous, he lays down the following proposition: "Saint Peter and Saint Paul are two heads of the Church who are but one;" which Pope Innocent X. declared to be heretical on the 24th of January, 1647, and prohibited the reading any books which contained it, and Pope Alexander VIII. condemned on the 7th of December, 1690, several other articles which are in the same book. The faithful must not seek instruction on Communion in these poisonous sources, but let them read Orthodox works which discuss it, particularly the sermons of two illustrious Preachers; those of Bourdaloue for the first Thursday in Lent, for Palm Sunday, the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi, and for the 23 Sunday after Pentecost; and those of Father La Rue for Palm Sunday, for Tuesday in Holy Week, and for the Monday in Easter week. There they will learn sound doctrine on worthy and frequent Communion.

(165) S. Ambr. de Pœniten. lib. 2. cap. ix.

divine mysteries; that, in that, they punished themselves too severely, and with a sort of cruelty; that they set themselves as a penance the privation of a remedy requisite for the cure of the evil; that they had no regret in consequence of it, which nevertheless they ought to feel, because this privation deprived them of celestial grace.

Every one knows that the Church teaches(166) that no person, whose conscience upbraids him with any mortal sin, whatever contrition he may seem to himself to have, may approach the holy Eucharist, unless having previously purified himself by sacramental confession: to act otherwise would be, as St. Paul says,(167) to be guilty of crime against the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ; it would be to eat his own condemnation, not discerning the Body of our Lord; we must be in a state of grace to receive worthily. It is also well known, that all sinners do not resemble the Prodigal Son; that, at the first signs of repentance, they ought not to be admitted to the holy Table; that after certain crimes, after an habitual attachment to sin, a faithful minister must prudently, and according to the spirit of the Church, have sufficient proof of the sincerity of the penitent before admitting him to the holy communion, and even before giving him absolution. St. Ambrose (168) says of false penitents who solicit absolution, to go immediately to communion, that they are not loosed, and that they bind the priest; that

(166) Conc. Triden. sess. 13. cap. vii.

(167) 1 Cor. xi. 27 and 29.

(168) S. Ambros. de Pœnit. lib. 2. cap. ix.

their consciences are not cleared, and that they implicate him because he is forbidden from giving what is holy to the dogs.(169) If a person communicates frequently and derives little fruit from it, but is tepid and supine, and does not exert himself to avoid venial sins, particularly those which are most considerable and dangerous, it is certain that a prudent director ought to interrupt the course of his communions, and endeavour to inspire him with greater sentiments of penance and fervour, and with an ardent desire to make at an early period a salutary use of the Bread of Life.

Finally, the teachers of spiritual life approved of persons sometimes abstaining from communion to punish some small faults, to strengthen their fragility by a more lively sorrow, as has been the practice of many of the saints, provided that they quickly return to the divine nourishment which St. Ambrose and St. Augustine (170) have called the remedy for ordinary faults, and which is the most effectual means of attaining perfection.

All these maxims are based on the doctrine of the holy Fathers. But that, for receiving the body of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to have acquired perfection, and to abstain from it as long as a person is not perfect, is what they never taught. When it was said, that innocence was to be taken to the altar, and that persons ought to

(169) Math. vii. 6.

(170) S. Ambr. de Sacram. lib. 4. cap. vi. et lib. 5. cap. 4. S. August. Epist. 54 suprà.

approach the holy table with angelic purity, with a holiness more brilliant than the rays of the sun ; they imitated the conduct of God in the commandment he gives us to love Him with our whole heart, with all our strength, and with all our mind (171). The fund of weakness which is in us, says St. Augustin, (172) prevents us from loving in this life with all the perfection which those words imply ; we shall only love Him in that manner when we shall see Him face to face. Nevertheless, He even now gives us the command, and it is for the purpose of shewing us the term of the career which he opens to us, in which it is His desire, that by means of faith, hope, intention, prayer, and good works, we should advance, without halting, until we arrive at the plenitude and at the consummation of Divine love.

In the same manner the holy Fathers required the most perfect and most sublime dispositions in those who offered up the divine Sacrifice of the Mass, or participated in it, in order that they might form to themselves as exalted an idea of the holy mysteries as they had, and that they might continually strive to purify, improve, and sanctify themselves, in order to approach thereto more worthily on each succeeding occasion. It is not possible to attach any other meaning to their words ; for they exhorted all persons to communicate frequently, even daily, and they were well aware that the frailty of human nature gave no room to hope that these eminent disposi-

(171) Luke x. 27.

(172) S. August. de Spirit. et Litt. cap. xxxvi. et de Perf. Just. c. 8.

tions would at all times be found in the participants, where it would be fortunate if they were at length found after having frequently communicated during a whole life; besides the consideration that these dispositions must be the fruits of frequent communion. It is also in this way that we must understand what the angel said to St. Francis, in representing to him the purity required from Priests, by the symbol of a very clear liquid, and that which the Saint said to the priests of his order: keep nothing in you of yourselves, in order that He who gives himself wholly to you shall receive from you all that you are.

The great love which he had for Jesus Christ, and for the Sacrament, which contains His Body, His Blood, His Soul, and His Divinity, inspired him with a zeal and a tenderness of devotion to His Blessed Mother, which cannot be expressed, as St. Bonaventura remarks. He placed himself and his order under the protection of this Blessed Mother of God, whom he chose for his advocate; and in her, after Jesus Christ, was his chiefest confidence: for, said he, "it is she who made this God of Majesty our Brother; through her we have obtained mercy (173). He used, as we have noticed, to keep a Lent of six weeks, in honour of her glorious assumption; and he observed it with great sentiments of piety. These are the prayers

(173) Saint Cyril, at the Council of Ephesus, and the other Holy Fathers, attribute to Mary the work and the fruits of our Redemption, in this sense which is well understood by the faithful: that being the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, she gave to the World Him, by whom we have all been redeemed, and in whom we are justified Homil. S. Cyrilli in Nestor. Conc. Ephes. part. 2. pag. 583. edit. Labb.

and eulogiums he was in the habit of addressing her.

"Hail, Mary! Mother of God, ever a Virgin, most holy Lady and Queen, in whom is all the plenitude of grace (174) and every sort of good. Amongst women there are none born (175) like unto thee: Thou art the daughter and the handmaid of our celestial Father, the great King; and he has chosen Thee for the mother of His beloved Son. Thou art the Spouse of the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Hail to Thee, who art the palace, the

(174) Saint Thomas says, that the Blessed Virgin had the plenitude of grace, inasmuch as she received all the grace which was proportioned to her dignity of Mother of God; and he teaches us that this dignity is in a manner infinite, because it forms an intimate union with Jesus Christ who is God, from whence he concludes that Mary is more replenished with grace, than all the Angels and Men, according to the opinion of Saint Peter Chrysologus: "Singulis gratia se est largita per partes, Mariæ vero simul se totam dedit gratiæ plenitudo." Is it not thence legitimately inferred, that the Blessed Virgin had also the grace of being preserved from original sin? And it is not only the dictum of Saint Thomas from which the same consequence is deduced. It follows from what Saint Augustin says: "We know that Mary received as many more graces to enable her to triumph entirely over sin, since it is she who was deserving of conceiving and giving birth to Him, who faith assures us was exempt from all sin, and who was wholly incapable of having any contact with sin." And is it not in this sense that we must understand the very strong expression of Saint Anselm: "It behoved that the Blessed Virgin, who was to have the same Son as the Eternal Father, should be pure with such purity that any greater could not be imagined below that of God Himself?" S. Thomas, 3â Part. quæst 27, art 5, et 1â Part. quæst. 25.—art. 6. ad quartum. S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. 145, de Annunt. S. August. de nat. et grat. cap. xxxvi. S. Anselm. de Concept. Wading, cap. xviii.

(175) Saint Bernard also says, that there is one thing in which the Blessed Virgin never had and never will have any one like unto her; it is that she has the gladness of maternity with the honour of virginity. This is the privilege of Mary, which will never be given to any other: it is peculiar to her, and is at the same time ineffable. The same Saint adds, that all the virtues she appears to have in common with others, are nevertheless peculiar to her, inasmuch as they are incomparably more perfect in her than in others. Serm. de Assumpt.

temple. and the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. I honour all the virtues with which Thou art filled. Thou who art as mild as Thou art beautiful, implore Thy very dear Son, conjure Him by His great clemency, by the virtue of His most sacred Incarnation and that of His most painful death, to pardon our faults. Amen.

The indissoluble ties of spiritual love, says the holy doctor, whom we have quoted, united Francis to the hierarchy of the angels, caused by the marvellous fire which absorbs them in God, and with which they influence the elect. The ardent zeal he had for the salvation of souls, attached him intimately to the archangel, St. Michael, because his employment is to present them to the throne of the Divine Majesty. It was to honour these blessed spirits, that he kept every year a Lent of forty days, before the feast of St. Michael, adding to it a continual exercise of prayer. He had prescribed to himself another Lent, to prepare for the festival of All Saints, who seemed to him to be, according to the expression of Ezekiel, precious stones, glittering as fire, the memory alone of which (176) excited him to a more fervent love of God. The great love which all the Apostles had for Jesus Christ, led him to revere them with peculiar devotion, particularly Saints Peter and

(176) Saint Bernard speaks in these terms of the memory of the Saints: 'I acknowledge, my brethren, that this memory excites these ardent wishes in me: that of their society, that of a similar beatitude, and that of their intercession." Such wishes lead to an imitation of their virtues, draw down their protection, render the wisher worthy to be admitted into their company, and to participate in their bliss.

Paul, in honour of whom, he fasted from Whit-Sunday to their feast.

It is useful to remark here, that this great Saint who was raised to a sublime degree of prayer, did not neglect, nevertheless, the usual practices of piety with the rest of the faithful. This may serve as a preservative against an illusion, which might lead to the belief that they are useless to the spiritual, and that those who are mystical, may dispense with them to devote themselves to contemplation. His heart was so full and so penetrated with that true and sincere piety, of which charity is the soul, that it seemed to have entire possession of him. It united him incessantly to God, to the friends of God, and to every thing which was holy; but as the Apostle says, that it is profitable to all things (177), it gave him a fund of all that was good, a spirit of meekness, of condescension, and of zeal, to communicate with his neighbour.

All men were dear to him, because he saw in them the same nature, the same grace, the image of the Creator, and the Blood of the Redeemer. If he had not taken care of the salvation of souls, which Jesus Christ had redeemed, he would not have considered himself among the number of His friends. "Nothing," he said, "is preferable to the salvation of souls;" and he gave several reasons for this, and principally this one: that for them, the only Son of God had condescended to be nailed to the cross. It was also for them that He laboured and lived; for them in some measure He called in question the justice of God in prayer,

(177) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

and powerfully solicited His mercy; for them He frequently forewent the sweets of a contemplative life; he undertook journeys, he preached everywhere, he exposed himself to martyrdom, and their edification was one of his motives in the practice of virtue. Although his innocent flesh, already perfectly under the control of the spirit, did not require to be chastised for any faults, he nevertheless mortified it in various ways for the edification of his neighbour. When he was censured for his too great austerities; "I am sent," he replied, "to give this example; if I had not the charity to give it, (178) I should be of little use to others, and of none to myself; although I spoke all the languages, known to men and angels."

Seeing that a multitude of persons, stimulated by his example, fervently embraced the cross of Christ, he became animated with fresh courage to put himself at the head of these pious troops, as a valiant captain, in order to gain with them a victory over the devil, by the practice of a perfect and invincible virtue.

The sanctity of his life gave him great freedom in his manner of preaching. He spoke fearlessly, without any apprehension of what critics might say, because he had acted before teaching, and he felt and had experienced all he said. The zealous preacher knew not how to flatter. Far from sparing sinners by complacence, he reproached their vices in forcible language, and attacked their disorderly conduct with great vehemence. The

(178) 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

presence of the great of the world did not intimidate him; he spoke to them as plainly and forcibly as he had done to the common people; and as all souls were equally dear to him, he preached as willingly, and with as much zest, to few people, as to a crowded auditory. This is an excellent model which teaches preachers to be themselves exemplary, to speak the truth without fear, and not to neglect small auditories.

The tender love which St. Francis bore for souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, rendered him very sensible to their misfortunes. When he knew of any one stained by the filth of sin, he lamented over it with such deep grief, that he was as a mother, who brings forth in pain and suffering, to restore it to Jesus Christ. His charity, fertile in expedients, inspired him sometimes to give to wicked persons temporal assistance, with a view of getting them to return to the ways of salvation. One day, when he was at the convent of Mount Casal, Brother Angelo, who was the guardian of it, told him that there were in the neighbourhood three notorious thieves, who injured considerably the farmers of the vicinity, and daily came and extorted from them the bread which was destined for the convent, without their being able to prevent it. "Brother," he replied, "if you will do what I will point out to you, my confidence in God tells me that you will reform these men, and gain their souls. Go and seek them out, although they are thieves, they are still our brothers. Take them the best bread you have, and some wine, spread a cloth on the ground, and invite them to

eat with you; while they are eating speak to them of holy things, in an insinuating manner, both yourself and your companion; humbly entreat them to injure no one any more. If they promise you this, return to them the next day, and take them something to eat, with bread and wine as before, and tell them that you bring them that, as to brethren and friends, who have granted you what you asked of them. If you do this a third time, do not doubt but God will enlighten them, and touch their hearts, and bring them into the right way."

Brother Angelo followed this advice, and gained over the thieves so completely, that they gave up their lives of plunderers, and began to render service to the convent, supplying them with firewood, which they carried to them on their shoulders. Their conversion was complete; one of them entered the order, and the other two went elsewhere to embrace a penitential life. The guardian used similar means for converting three other thieves, who retired into the recesses of the mountain, after having induced the saint to pray for them. They became afterwards all three Friars Minors, and lived holy lives.

The affection which our saint had always shown for the poor from his infancy, during the first years of his youth, and at the beginning of his conversion, became stronger and stronger, and was manifested on all occasions. St. Bonaventura says, that he spared nothing to come to their assistance. Cloaks, tunics, books, the ornaments of the Church, all that he had he gave to them.

Many times he has been seen to take the burdens from the poor he met on the road, and bear them on his own weak shoulders. When he returned from begging, he shared what he had received with any that solicited alms at his hands; and as long as anything remained, he never refused any one.

At Sienna, a small cloak had been given to him, which was very necessary for his infirmities, but in leaving the town he met a poor person, whose wretched state excited his pity, and he said to his companion: "Let us restore this cloak to him, for it belongs to him; we have only borrowed it, until such time as we should see some one poorer than ourselves." The companion knowing that Francis really required it, endeavoured to prevent his parting with it, but the father made him this answer: "If I did not give this cloak to a poor man, who had more need of it than I have, I should think I had committed a theft, which I should be convicted of by our Sovereign Lord, who is the universal almoner." It was for this reason that when anything was given him, he asked leave to give it away, if he should meet with any one poorer than himself.

On the same principle, notwithstanding his infirmities, when he was at the convent at Celles, he gave another cloak, which he had received in charity to a poor woman, who had two little children who were almost naked. One of the brothers having taken it back, promising to give the woman something else instead: "my brother," the Saint said immediately, "kneel down and ac-

knowledge your fault; give the cloak back to the woman, she is poorer than I am." His companions got him another, and he gave it again to a man of Cortona, who came to solicit alms for the love of God, at the same convent at Celles, and who said that his wife was dead, and that he had several little children and that he had no food for them: "I give you this cloak," said the Saint, "on this condition, that if you are asked to give it back, you do no such thing, unless you receive its full value." The brethren, indeed, did all they could to induce him to give it back—they told him there was no one poorer than the person who had given it to him, or who wanted it more on account of his bad health and the rigour of the season. But the man, referring to what his benefactor had said, answered that the cloak was his, and that he would not part with it, unless he received its full value; in order, therefore, to have it returned they were under the necessity of taking him to a friend who gave him in money what the cloak was considered to be worth.

A very old woman, the mother of two of the Friars Minors, having come to the convent of St. Mary of the Angels, to ask for charity: Francis told the guardian to give her something, and he having said that there was not anything then in the convent, which could be given, unless it was a book of the gospel which the brethren read out of, when they were in choir: "Give it," said the Father, "that the poor woman may sell it to provide for her necessities. I believe that that will be more ageeable to God, than reading

out of it.—What is it that a mother has not a right to require from us, who has given two of her sons to the religious?

Another time, a poor man half-naked, came to ask for an old habit, or some pieces of one to cover himself with. Francis desired them to look out for some habit that was not used. As such an one was not to be found, he stole aside and began to unpick some breadths of his own, in order to give them to the man; the guardian being informed of this, came down hastily and forbad his taking them out: "I will obey you," "because you are my superior, but give this poor man something to cover himself with, otherwise I shall have a scruple, and shall be grieved to be obliged to wear an entire habit which is lined, to keep me warm, while this poor naked man is shivering with cold at the gate." He went to the poor man to console him, and did not leave him until the guardian had given him something wherewith to clothe himself, and this alms was no less comforting to his charitable feelings than the clothing was to the misery of the poor man. By a similar impulse of charity, and in order to prevent their offending God, he gave his cloak to a servant who complained of the great injury his master had done him, cursing him and blaspheming Providence for allowing the poor to be so ill used, on condition that he would leave off cursing and blaspheming.

The physician who saw the saint in his illness, near Rieti, having one day mentioned the extreme poverty of an old woman who was begging, he sent for the guardian, and said: "Here is a cloak which I

have worn until such time as some one should be found who has a greater right to it than I have; I beg you to send it with some of the bread which has been received on the quest, by one of the brethren to our sister, who is very poor; and let him say that we only give her what belongs to her; I conceive that what is given to us can only be ours until such time as some one shall come forward, who is more in want of it than we are." Not to vex the holy man, the commission was faithfully executed; but the puzzle was where to get another cloak to give, and a tunic besides, for he had given his own to another poor person. As the guardian was turning this in his mind, some cloth was brought which the lords, attendants on the Pope who was at Rieti, sent him; and there was enough to make habits for all the brethren.

Some short time afterwards, Francis being a little less ill, went to preach at Celano, as we have already noticed. He found in the town a poor woman who was almost naked, who asked for something to cover her. He first threw her his cloak, and upon her representing to him that that was insufficient, he threw her the cloak of his companion, saying to him: "Brother, let us put up for awhile with the rigour of the cold, in order to give this woman wherewithal to clothe herself. It is not fitting that the true poor should be doubly clad to warm them, while they see other poor obliged to go in a state of nudity.

The blessed Patriarch wished that such of his children who had not studied, and had no talent for preaching, should be employed in serving their

brethren, and should frequent the hospitals; there to render the meanest offices to the lepers with humility and charity. He took them there himself and was the first to make their beds, to dress their sores, to cleanse away the matter, and to wash them; sometimes he put his tongue to the wounds, and licked them. When application was made by any one to join the order, he never failed to warn the postulant that he would have to attend the lepers; and he often made this their trial; he rejected those who could not make up their minds to perform these functions; but he tenderly embraced such as submitted willingly to them, encouraged them, and made them love the lepers by calling them "Christian brothers," (179) as if they were supereminently such.

Brother James the Simple, who came from Perugia, was greatly distinguished by his zeal in this charitable exercise, insomuch that they gave him the name of the steward and physician of the lepers. Francis recommended one to him, whose body was one mass of sores from his head to his feet. James took such care of him, that, by degrees, he regained his strength, and thinking fresh air would contribute to his restoration, he took him with him, although still full of ulcers, to the convent of Saint Mary of the Angels. This appeared to the Saint who met him, to have been very indiscreet, and he said to brother James: "You should not lead about in

(179) He probably called them so, because they were the type of our Lord Jesus Christ—of whom the Prophet Isaias says: "We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted." Isaias liii. 4.

this manner the Christian brothers, it is neither proper in you nor good for them. I wish you to serve them in their hospital, but I do not wish you to take them out of it; for there are many persons who cannot bear the sight of them." The leper was distressed at hearing his benefactor thus reprimanded, and he blushed for shame. Francis perceiving him to have been mortified, threw himself immediately at his feet, and begged his pardon, and in order to encourage him, he imposed a penance on himself for which he desired to have leave from Peter of Catana, the vicar of the convent; this was to eat at the door of the convent, out of the same plate with the leper. After which he embraced and kissed him, and dismissed him satisfied.

There was in the hospital a leper who was so impatient and so violent, that he abused and struck the Friars Minors who served him, and even went so far as to blaspheme God. They reported this to their father, who offered himself to the sick man, to wait upon him. "What can you do for me more than your companions have done," replied the invalid? "Ever since I have had this insupportable disorder God has forgotten me. I am in despair, I can live no longer; no one can mitigate my sufferings, neither you nor any one else." Francis seeing that he was agitated by the evil spirit, left him for a while, prayed for him, and returned to exhort him to be patient, by the most urgent motives. As he saw that the man became calmer, he asked him what it would be most agreeable to him that he should do for him? He said it would be to wash

his whole body, for that he could no longer endure the stench of the infection. The saint quickly got some water warmed, into which he put aromatic herbs, and began to wash him himself, while his companion poured out the water. As he washed, his cure advanced, and at the same time the grace of God made such impression on the mind of the patient, that, as the water flowed from his body, the tears flowed from his eyes. The washing having terminated, the leper being perfectly cleansed and converted, publicly confessed his sins, asked for mercy, and went through a rigorous course of penance. He died a few months afterwards, and appeared to the saint, thanking him, that by his means after a light punishment in purgatory, he was about to enjoy eternal glory.

God performed a different miracle on another occasion, to justify the charity of His servant to the poor. At Alexandria de la Paille, a town of the Milanese, where he was received as a saint, he was invited to dinner by a wealthy and pious man. While he was at table, a man of bad character, who was, however, jealous of Francis' reputation, watched all his actions, in order to decry and criticise them ; this man counterfeited a beggar at the door and solicited an alms for the love of God. As soon as Francis heard the appeal for the love of God, he sent him the wing of a fowl, to which he had been just helped. The sham beggar, to whom it was taken, kept it. The next day he produced it, in a large concourse of people, where the Saint was preaching, and interrupting the discourse, he said in a loud voice : " This is the

food on which the preacher feeds ; should such a man be honoured as a saint ?" His malice received a signal check ; the wing of the fowl which he exhibited appeared to the bystanders to be fish, and he was thought to have lost his wits. He himself perceiving that what he held up was nothing but fish, was ashamed of what he had said, was touched with remorse, and himself published what had happened. After which, one miracle succeeded another, it was found that what had appeared to be fish, was in reality flesh. Thus did the Lord vindicate the virtue of His servant, punish envy, and convert the envious. The malignity of envy often finds its punishment in the artifices it employs to injure persons of virtue, but it is very unusual for the envious to be so converted.

St. Bonaventura says, that St. Francis felt a most tender compassion for all who suffered from temporal ills ; that, indeed, he had naturally a feeling heart, but that the goodness of the heart of Jesus Christ, communicating itself to his, rendered it still more compassionate ; he was the more sensible of the afflictions of others, as in all the poor, and in all those who suffered, he represented to himself his Divine Master, poor and suffering. In which, continues the holy doctor, he who was himself poor, showed that he was so as a perfect Christian.

When he had it not in his power to alleviate the sufferings of those in indigence or sickness, he endeavoured at least by soothing words to assuage their feelings. One day, when he was about to preach, he was entreated by a poor and infirm man

to recommend him to the auditors. His compassion was excited, and with tears in his eyes he said to his companion, that he felt the man's ills as if they were his own. His companion answered the man rather drily, who was importunate in asking for alms, and in order to moderate the feelings of the saint, he said: "If we judged by exteriors, this man is apparently in great misery; but if we could penetrate his interior, we should perhaps find that in the whole province there is not an individual richer in wishes, or more eaten up with pride; such characters are frequently found among beggars." Francis censured him severely, for, having repulsed the poor man, and then judged him with so much asperity, and pointed out to him, that in that he grievously offended God. The Religious acknowledged his error, and asked pardon on his knees. "I shall not pardon you," said Francis, "unless you take off your habit, prostrate yourself before the poor man, acknowledge your fault, entreat him to pardon you, and to pray for you." The humble penitent did immediately all that he had been desired to do, after which Francis embraced him, and said, with great mildness: "My son, it is not so much against the poor man that you have sinned, as against Jesus Christ, for He is in all the poor; they are so many mirrors, in which He represents to us His own poverty, and that of His Blessed Mother. Therefore, as often as you see the poor and the sick, respect them, and humble yourself in their presence; consider with sentiments of piety, that the Son of God made Himself poor for our sakes,

and condescended to take upon Himself our infirmities." (180)

If we cherish these Christian-like views, we should not judge so harshly of the poor, of whom it is no less faulty to judge, than of the rich ; and in their poverty we should find as powerful motives for loving Jesus Christ, as for affording the succour they require.

The heart of St. Francis was naturally so kind and so tender, that he felt an affection for creatures, but it was from a profound sentiment of piety that he called them his brothers and his sisters. Going back to the origin of things, St. Bonaventura says, that he considered all that had being as having emanated from the bosom of the Divinity, and he acknowledged that they had the same principle as himself. In fact, the creation established amongst them a sort of fraternity ; God being the parent of all nature, it is not to be denied that in this sense everything which composes it is brotherly. And who can censure a man who is wholly religious, from expressing himself in a manner which is grounded on the first principles of religion? This trait shews both the elevation of his mind, and the piety of his heart ; heretics alone can blame it. (181)

(180) 2 Cor. viii. 9 ; Isaias liii. 4.

(181) The Calvinist, Jurieu, laid hold of this circumstance in the Life of Saint Francis, and treated it with an asperity of censure, of which even the Protestants themselves have highly disapproved on other occasions. Ferrand, who was a celebrated controversialist, pointed out, after having refuted the calumnies of the Minister, the injustice of his invectives against him for having given the names of brother and sister to animals, which

Among animals, those he preferred were such as reminded him of the mildness of Jesus Christ, or were the symbol of some particular virtue, or which gave rise to some edifying reflections; and God has sometimes shown by miracles, how much the motive of these feelings was pleasing to Him. Lambs were peculiarly agreeable to the holy man, in memory of the meek Lamb, who permitted Himself to be led to the slaughter for the redemption of sinners; he frequently purchased them, to prevent their being killed.

While he was staying at the monastery of St. Vereconda, which is in the diocese of Gubbio, he found that on the previous night a sow had killed with its teeth a lamb, which had just been born The Lamb without spot whom sinners put to death flashed immediately upon his recollection, and the pity this excited in him, caused him to lament sorely the death of the little animal, which was a symbol of meekness, to curse the cruel beast which had killed it, and to wish

the Saint gave to all creatures. Bayle, who notices these things, says that he pities Ferrand who had undertaken the apology of these interesting fraternities; as if it were a disgrace for man whom God created, that He should also have been the Creator of animals and the Father of every thing in nature. But with whom did this Philosopher fraternize when he took such pains to support the extravagant doctrine of the Manichæans on the two principles? By fallacious and crafty argument, he encouraged libertines and the impious to assert that revelation is in direct opposition to reason; for this is what is deducible from his captious difficulties. We may be assured that heretics, who, like himself, consider themselves dishonoured by the fraternity of creatures, nevertheless bring themselves to fraternize with Demons, by the pride which renders them rebels to God, by their revolt against His Church. Saint Polycarp, according to Saint Irenæus, thought this connexion still greater. Having met at Rome, the heresiarch Marcion, who asked him if he knew him? "Yes, replied he, I know you for Satan's eldest son." S. Iren. contr. Hæres. lib. 3. cap. iii.

that neither man nor beast might eat of its flesh. The sow was at that moment struck with a disease, of which it died in three days. It was thrown into a ravine, not far distant from the monastery, and no animal ventured to touch it; it became dry and hard as a piece of wood. St. Bonaventura remarks on this occasion, that if God was pleased to punish with death the cruelty of a beast, how infinitely more severe must not cruel and pitiless men think their punishment will be in the other world.

A lad went to Sienna to sell some turtle-doves which he had taken alive. Francis met him on his way, and said: "These are innocent birds, which are compared in Scripture to chaste and faithful souls.(182) I beg you earnestly not to put them into the hands of persons who would kill them, but to confide them to me." They were given to him, and he put them immediately into his bosom; he spoke to them as if they were capable of reasoning, not only by that natural impulse which induces us constantly to speak to animals when we caress them, but also by an impression of the spirit of God; for he foretold a great miracle, promising to prepare a nest for them where they might increase and multiply, according to the intention of their Creator. Having taken them to his convent of Ravacciano, near the walls of Sienna, he forced his stick into the ground before the gate, and the stick became by the following day a large evergreen oak. He let the turtle-doves fly into it, desiring them to make

(182) Cant. i. 9. and ii. 12.

their nests there, which they did for many succeeding years, and they were so familiar with the religious, that they came to feed from their hands. Wading says that the tree is still there.

Nor did the young man go unrewarded. Francis told him that he would become a religious of his order, and that he would acquire eternal glory; he did, in fact, enter the order, and lived so holily as to deserve it. The miracle was the cause of his vocation, and at the same time sanctioned the affection the saint showed these birds, he only loved God through the affection he showed to His creatures. So also St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, according to the testimony of St. Gregory of Nyssa, (183) having planted his stick in a spot where a river was breaking down the dyke, and doing damage through the country, the Lord changed it suddenly into a large tree, which checked the flood entirely, and served to honour the faith of his servant, and incite the infidels to believe in Jesus Christ.

The divine love which inflamed the heart of St. Francis made everything appear amiable to him which could tend to the love and service of God. For this reason he was fond of birds, whose carol seemed to invite mankind to publish the glory of their Creator, who, according to the words of Jesus Christ, "neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." (184) It was gratifying to him to remark

(183) S. Gregor. Nyssen, in vit. S. Greg. Thaumat. Oper. tom. 2. pag. 99 and 992.

(184) Math. vi. 26.

the grey and ash colour of larks the colour he had chosen for his order, in order that they might often think on death. He also loved to admire the disposition of the plumage of such as were crested which seemed to him to have some relation to the simplicity of his habit. On the lark rising into the air, and singing as soon as it has taken some grains of corn for its nourishment, he remarked with sensible pleasure that this example ought to teach us to give thanks to our common Father, who gives us wherewithal for our sustenance, only to eat for His glory, to despise the earth, and to raise ourselves up to heaven, where our conversation ought to be.(185) He was more fond of these small birds than of any others, because they induced holy thoughts, and he took as much care of them as he could.

As he had noble and spiritual motives for his simplest and most common actions, God made use of this for the instruction of men by the example of a bird. Near the convent of mount Ranier, or mount Colombo, there was a nest of crested larks, the mother of which came every day to feed out of the hand of the servant of God. and took sufficient for herself and her brood ; when they began to be strong, she brought the little ones to him. He perceived that the strongest of the brood pecked the others, and prevented them from taking up the grain. This displeased him, and addressing himself to the little bird, as if it could understand him : " Cruel and insatiable little animal," he said, " you will die miserably,

(185) Cor. x. 31. Philip. iii. 20.

and the greediest animals will not be willing to eat your flesh." In fact, some days afterwards it was drowned in a basin, which was placed for them to drink out of. It was given to the cats and dogs, to see if they would eat it; but neither would touch it. It may be thought that so trifling an anecdote was not worth recording, but there is nothing trifling in the moral it contains. It is a natural representation of those greedy and insatiable men who devour the substance of their brethren, and envy them all that they cannot despoil them of; enemies of mankind, unworthy of the name of men, thieves, ruffians, ravaging wolves, as they are designated in Scripture,(186) whose voracity, say the holy fathers,(187) surpasses that of wild beasts, whose life is a public calamity; hated and detested by all, during their lives, they die as they have lived, and their memory is held in execration.(188)

The tenderheartedness which Francis evinced for animals has been ridiculed by heretics. Nevertheless, the Holy Ghost tells us by the mouth of Wisdom, "that the just man regardeth the lives of his beasts," (189) The Patriarch Jacob (190) excused himself from following his brother Esau, because his ewes and cows were heavy, and he was fearful he should kill them if he hurried them. When St. Paul said: "Doth God take care of oxen?"(191) he only wished to

(186) Isai. i. 23. Ezech. xxii. 27. (187) S. Chrys. Orat. de avar.

(188) S. Aug. serm. 367, alias 25, de verb. Dom.

(189) Prov. xii. 10. (190) Genes. xxxiii. 13. (191) 1 Cor. ix. 9.

insinuate that God is far more interested in what regards men; and what is written in the law of Moses: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn on the floor,"(192) must be applied with greater reason to the ministers of Jesus Christ, to prove that they have a right to live by the altar. We see in the old law many regulations made for the repose of beasts, and for their preservation; it was, in particular, to avert men from any sort of cruelty to their fellow-men; for it has always been remarked, that such as are cruel to animals, are generally so to men also.(193) Tenderness must not degenerate into extravagance, which would make an idol of a beast, for which they sometimes feel more than for persons who ought to be dear to them, and of which they take more care than of the poor who are members of Jesus Christ; but natural mildness and a spirit of piety induce us not to injure animals, but to be kind to them.

In this view St. Chrysostom,(194) commenting on the words of Wisdom, which we have just quoted, says that the saints are tender-hearted, that they love all men, strangers as well as their own countrymen and their own families, and that their good feelings are extended to senseless animals.

Sulpicius Severus(195) relates of St. Martin, that seeing some hounds pursuing a hare, which they

(192) Deut. xxv. 4.

(193) Exod. 23. Levit. xxii. Deut. xxii and 25.

(194) S. Chrys. in Epist. ad Rom. hom. 29 in mor.

(195) Sulp. Sev. Dial 2. de Virt. S. Mart. n. 10.

were on the point of catching, he ordered them to stop; he had no sooner spoken, than the hounds became immoveable on the spot where they were, and they did not stir till the hare was placed in safety.

An author of the life of St. Bernard,(196) who had been his secretary, says that not only men, but irrational animals also, birds, and other beasts, felt the effects of his tenderness. He adds that the saint, in one of his journeys, coming close to a hare which the dogs were about to catch, and where a bird was nearly seized in the talons of a hawk, delivered them both miraculously by the sign of the cross, and then told the sportsmen that all their efforts would be useless for taking this prey when he was by.

If it has been thought proper not to omit in his life, and in that of St. Martin also, these anecdotes of the goodness of their hearts, which were enhanced by supernatural evidence, and of which God approved by mere efforts of His power; what right can critics have to censure precisely similar circumstances in the life of St. Francis?

The glorious patriarch, who praised God in the minutest things, procured his glory in the greatest. His principal care was to lead his brethren to perfection, to render them worthy imitators of Jesus crucified, capable of exciting his love in all hearts. It would be difficult to point out the founder of an order, who had spoken more, taught more, or exhorted more than St. Francis, and it may have been noticed that he instructed his disciples in the

(196) Vit. S. Bern. auct. Gaufr. lib. iii. cap. 7. n. 28. apud Mabill.

most solid and eminent virtues. He recommended them to put the Gospel in practice, as they had promised to do in making profession of the rule, to adore profoundly and with great devotion the Body of Jesus Christ ; to hear mass most devoutly, to celebrate the divine office with attention, carefully to keep all the ordinances of the Church ; to have the greatest veneration for all priests, humbly to bow in their presence, and to kiss their hands. He even said that if it could be done, they ought to kiss the feet of the horses on which they rode, to honour the power which they have of consecrating and administering the divine mysteries.

When abroad it was his desire that his religious should appear with so much modesty, reserve, and circumspection, that every one might be edified thereby, and glorify God therein. "Do not despise the men of the world," he said, "and judge not ill of them.(197) You are not to judge other person's servants who are not yours ; whether they stand or fall, it is not your affair, but that of their masters. Have peace in your own mind, make it known to others, inspire it to all ; labour for the conversion of sinners, for that is your vocation."

Attentive to the regulation of the interior, he incessantly exhorted them to correct the smallest defects, to exercise themselves in the practice of holy prayer, to meditate on the Passion of our Blessed Saviour, and to use all their efforts to preserve union and fraternal love. "Happy,"

(297) Rom. xiv. 4.

said he, "is the man who loves his brothers at a distance as well as when they are together, and who would not say in his absence, what charity would prevent his saying in his presence."

This last article called forth all his vigilance. Hearing that one of his brethren had sinned against charity by some conversation in which he had traduced the reputation of another, he said to the vicar of the convent: "Go quickly, and inform yourself correctly of what occurred, and if you find the accused innocent, give a severe correction to the accuser, which shall mark him in the eyes of his brethren. The order is in danger, if the system of backbiting is not checked; the good odour will be lost if the poisoned tongue of slanderers is not stopped. I desire that you will take the greatest care to prevent this pestilential malady from spreading. The religious, who has injured the reputation of his brother, should be stripped of his habit; he ought not to be allowed to raise his eyes to heaven, till he has restored what he has taken from him."

St. Bonaventura says that St. Francis had as great a horror of detraction as of the bite of a serpent; it is the comparison made by the Holy Ghost.(198) This is the way in which he spoke of it: "My brethren, the vice of detraction destroys the principle of piety; it dries up the source of grace, it is an abomination in the sight of God, who is infinitely good, because he who detracts nourishes himself with the blood of souls, which

(198) Eccl. x. 11.

he kills with his tongue, as with a sword. Detractors resemble thieves and murderers, and are more cruel than these, because the love of Jesus Christ, which is fulfilled by charity, obliges us to be more zealous for souls than for the preservation of the body. What does a brother do, who murmurs against his brethren and against his superiors? Nothing less than pour gall into the order which is his mother. Detractors are of the race of Cham, who, instead of covering what ought to have been hidden of his father, came and told his brothers where he had found him.(199) Thus, also, by detraction, they discover and exaggerate the faults of their brethren and superiors, which draws down the malediction of heaven. Detractors rout carefully into the defects of others as swine into filth; and more unclean than those animals, they nourish their minds with what they find, or perhaps with what they invent. By their continual complaints on all sorts of subjects, they are like dogs, that bark and bite on all sides, and gnaw the entrails of their neighbour.

In the sequel of this discourse, the saint points out that those detractors who constitute themselves censors of others, are hypocrites, ambitious and cowardly flatterers; they strive to appear virtuous, without endeavouring to be so; they bring accusations against the vicious, but do not correct their own vices; they wish to be considered spiritual persons,(200) competent to give

(199) Genes. ix.

(200) Saint Paul says: "The spiritual man judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man."—1 Cor. ii. 15. The heretics of the last centuries have made a bad use of this text in support of their fanaticism

opinions on all subjects, and not to be themselves judged by any; and they give pernicious praise to those from whom they hope to receive support, while they refuse just praise to those from whom they have nothing to expect.

This vigilant pastor, being one day at prayer, saw the convent as if besieged by an army of devils, not one of whom could effect an entrance. But it so happened, that one of the brethren being greatly incensed against another, came to a resolution to injure him by calumniating him, and then Francis saw one of the devils enter, who attacked the calumniator with great fury. Moved by the danger in which he saw the religious, he sent for him immediately, and advised him to reject the poison of hatred which he nourished in his heart against his enemy. This Friar, alarmed at having been discovered, acknowledged his fault, asked pardon and penance, and went and reconciled himself to his brother. The man of God saw the demon take to flight, and he told the religious he had seen this, who gave fervent thanks

as to the particular inspiration on points of faith, this it is to which all the sects are obliged to recur. But the first opinion which a spiritual man forms who follows the Spirit of God, is, that he must believe all that the Church proposes to his belief; that Church which the Holy Spirit gives to all the Faithful as their Mother and Mistress; and this opinion is so certain that no one can controvert it without falling into error. There are men, also, who affect spirituality, and who under that pretence, take the liberty of judging others, but who are sensibly offended when others censure them. The words of the Apostle cannot justify them, for they do not purport that the spiritual man does not judge any one, but that he judges all things; that is to say, that if he is truly spiritual, he judges all the things by the light he receives from the Holy Ghost. Those who are guided by the same Spirit do not blame him because they act on similar principles, but those who have not the Spirit of God are not capable o judging him.

to God and to his Father, and made a firm resolution not to give any more hold to so cruel an enemy.

It was the custom of the holy founder daily to examine into the state of regularity of his convent. He permitted no relaxation to creep in ; whatever he found defective, he corrected. He often affixed rude and humiliating penances for trifling faults, not only to keep up amongst his brethren a spirit of mortification, but to teach them to look upon all faults as great and considerable, as relative to the state of perfection into which they had entered.

In the view of rendering them more perfect, he frequently counteracted the bent of their devotion. Brother Massé was a very spiritual man, who was much attached to prayer. Francis, in order to try him, said to him, one day in presence of the others, " Brother, these have received from God a greater gift of contemplation than you have. For which reason, in order to give them more time to give themselves more freely to it, it seems proper that you, who seem more calculated for exterior duties, should have the care of the door and of the kitchen ; and if there is any time over, you will employ it in questing. Take great care that the strangers who may call, do not interrupt your brethren in their meditations. As soon as they may knock at the door, be there ready to receive them, satisfy them with fair words, and do everything which the others would have done, so that it shall not be necessary for any of them to make their appearance. Go in peace, and fail not in

doing all these things in order to have the merit of obedience."

Massé, bowing his head, submitted to the order of his superior, without hesitation or murmur, and during several days he acquitted himself faithfully of what had been directed. His companions, who knew his virtue and the love he had for prayer, had scruples at seeing him in these employments, and begged their Father to permit them to share these duties with him. He assented, and sending for Massé, said to him, "Brother, your companions wish to relieve and assist you, and I also wish that they may have a share in the labours." To which Massé replied, "Father, I consider as coming from God whatever duties you direct, whether in the whole or in part." St. Francis, seeing the charity on the one part, and the humility on the other, gave them an exhortation on these two virtues, and distributed the duties among them with his blessing.

What he had ardently desired for himself, and what he was rejoiced to see some of his look forward to most anxiously, was the perfection which consists in suffering martyrdom, in shedding one's blood for the faith. As he could not obtain this favour, and as it was only granted to a few of his brethren during his lifetime, he endeavoured to make up for it by another species of martyrdom, which, as St. Bernard says,(206) is indeed less cruel than the first, but which its duration renders more bitter. It is the martyrdom of mortification, and principally that of voluntary poverty. In

(201) S. Bern. in cant. serm. 30. n. 11.

fact, this poverty, as he compelled its observance, not only placed him and his brethren in the most humiliating situation in the eyes of the world, but deprived them moreover of all the comforts and conveniences of life, exposed them to hunger, thirst, want of clothing, and various other annoying discomforts. All this, however, was not in his view the consummation of this description of martyrdom. It was still further requisite to suffer patiently in time of pain and sickness, the want of assistance, which poverty cannot command, to see the disease increase, and death about to follow from want of necessary succour.

His charity had taken all possible precaution for procuring assistance to the sick of his order. He had directed, that if any of the brethren fell sick, the others should attend upon them, as they would wish to be themselves waited upon in like circumstances, and with more affection than a mother has for a beloved son. Notwithstanding the great aversion he had to money, he required that the superiors should make application to their spiritual friends, to induce them to give some in order to assist the brethren in their sickness. But, as he foresaw that this measure might not always be successful, and that poverty in such case would put it out of the power of the superiors to procure what was absolutely necessary for the sick, he pointed out to them what perfection called upon them to do.

"If one of the brethren, in health, or in sickness, finds himself unable through poverty to procure what his absolute necessities require, provided he

has humbly applied to his superior for them for the love of God, let him bear with the privation for the love of Jesus Christ, who sought for consolation but found none.(202) It is a suffering which will be in His sight a substitute for martyrdom; if this should even increase his disease, he must not fear being guilty of suicide, for he has done all he ought to have done by applying humbly to his superiors." The maxim is well grounded. St. Chrysostom (203) maintains, that to suffer generously the loss of his goods, as did holy Job, is a species of martyrdom. St. Bernard (204) says the same thing of voluntary poverty, and remarks, that in the beatitudes, a similar reward is promised to the poor and to martyrs. On those principles, is not a Friar Minor to be looked upon as a martyr, who, having embraced the strictest poverty for the love of Jesus Christ, would, rather than contravene it, endure with patience every evil, and even death, and would generously make to God the sacrifice of his health and of his life, in order to practise this virtue to his last breath? St. Augustine (205) affirms that a Christian suffers martyrdom in his bed, when he declines procuring his cure by forbidden means; thus, a sick Friar Minor who has not the necessary assistance, brought about by his having embraced poverty, according to the evangelical counsel, is a martyr to poverty. Even supposing

(202) Psalm. lxviii, 21. Isai. lxiii. 5.

(203) S. Chrys. in Epist. 2, ad Cor. homil 1. in mor.

(204) S. Bern. serm. 2. in Fest. Omn. Sanct. n. 15.

(205) S. August. serm. 206, n. 7.

that it was less owing to poverty than to the neglect or harshness of his superior that he was without assistance, he would equally have gained the crown promised to this description of martyrdom, since it would be as an evangelical pauper that he would suffer and die. But woe to that superior who should procure him such a crown! He would be like to those who have made so many martyrs in the persecutions of the Church.

When St. Francis learnt that his brethren, by the sanctity of their lives and by the efficacy of their preaching, brought back numbers of sinners into the paths of truth, and enkindled in their breasts the love of God, he said that such intelligence was to him as most pleasing odours and precious perfumes by which he was wholly embalmed; and, in his spiritual joy, he loaded these holy and edifying religious with the most ample benedictions. On the other hand, he fulminated dreadful maledictions against such as dishonoured religion by their conduct. "Most holy Lord," would he say, "may those who overthrow and destroy by their bad example, what Thou incessantly raisest up by the saintly brethren of the order be accursed by Thee and by the whole celestial choir, and also by me, Thy little servant."

Any scandal given to little ones gave him so much affliction and heartsore, that he often might have died of it, if God had not supported him by interior consolations. One day when he was suffering extreme grief on a subject of this nature, and was praying the Father of Mercies for his children, St. Bonaventura informs us that he

received the following answer: "Poor little man, why do you disquiet yourself? Because I have appointed you the pastor of this religion which I have established, are you unmindful that I am its principal Protector? I gave you the direction of it, to you who are a simple man, in order that what I should do through you, might be attributed not to human industry, but to My favour. It is I who called those who have entered it, I will preserve them and provide for their wants; I will substitute others for those who will die off, I will cause some to be born, in order to come into it; and whatever may occur to shake this religion which is founded on strict poverty, I will supply it by grace, so that it shall be always upheld." Up to this day, the world has seen the verification of this prophecy. The order of Friars Minors has been powerfully attacked, and has still many enemies, nevertheless it still subsists.

It is with respect to this order and to others as it is with the entire Church; there will always be in it some perfect and some defective, some strong and some weak. This is what was communicated to Brother Leo, in a vision which he had when he was standing by the bed of St. Francis, who was in his last moments. In an ecstasy he saw many religious of the order who were endeavouring to pass a large and deep river by a ford. Some who had heavy burthens were drowned, either on the brink or further on, or in the middle, according as their burthens were heavier or lighter. This scene grieved him sorely, but he had the consolation of seeing others who had no burthens, who

got across the river quickly and without danger. When he recovered from his ecstasy, the holy invalid asked him what he had seen, and Brother Leo having related his vision, Francis explained it thus: "The river is the world; the religious who bear burthens are those who, neglecting their profession, and violating the rules of evangelical poverty have a longing for the things of the earth; and by that they are lost in this world, and will suffer just punishments in hell. Those who have passed through the river without danger, are those religious, who, refusing to have any communication with the world, are contented with being poorly clad and fed, follow Jesus Christ naked, and have to carry only the yoke of the Lord, which is sweet, and the burden which is light. (206)

To animate his brethren to perfection, he employed example rather than precept. When he imposed punishments, if they appeared to him to be too severe, he took them also on himself. Having sent Brother Ruffinus to preach at Assisi without his hood, because he had sought to be excused from preaching, he reflected on the severity of this order, and went himself to the church where Ruffinus was preaching. The latter having left the pulpit to give it up to Francis, he began his discourse, and instilled into his audience so much compunction, that it was evident that God had blessed the obedience of the disciple and the example of the master.

This admirable preceptor taught no virtues which he did not himself practise in an eminent

(206) Math. xi. 30.

degree, and as those which are exterior make the greatest impression, he practised extreme austerity in order that the others should imitate him. Having noticed, on a certain occasion, that some of his brethren had relaxed from the extreme poverty of their nourishment, he thus slyly reprimanded them: "My brethren may well believe, that with so infirm a body as mine is, I require better nourishment than what I get, but I am obliged to be their model in everything; for which reason I propose to give up every alleviation, and to cast aside, with disgust, everything resembling delicacy, to be satisfied with little in everything, to make use of those things only which are the commonest, vilest, and most conformable to strict poverty."

Being in a hermitage in some mountains in mid-winter, when the weather was rigorously cold and severe, his companions prepared a habit for him, in which they lined the breast to make it somewhat warmer for him; but he made them take this out, saying, "I am placed here to give example to others, my life must be their rule; I know that there is no harm in wearing a warmer habit in the state I am in; but I see many of our brethren who require it as much as I do, and who could not get it. I must therefore bear this poverty with them, and not differ from them in anything, lest it should be thought that I take greater care of myself than of the others. They will more willingly bear the privation of these wants, when they shall see that I voluntarily go without them." His three companions, the writers

of his life, observe that he refused his body the most lawful indulgence, in order that his children should be ashamed of taking those which were less so, and that his maxim was, always to give instruction more by example than by discourse.

He recommended his brethren also to preach by example, and further on we shall see some beautiful sentiments in his maxims relative to preaching. Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, an excellent master of spiritual life, mentions (207) on this subject, a lesson which our Saint gave to one of his religious, which we give here in the very words of the talented academician,(208) who translated the Practice of Christian Perfection, of the pious author. St. Francis, taking one day one of his religious with him, "Let us go and preach," said he; and thereupon he went out, and after having made a tour round the town, he returned to his convent. "But, father," said his companion, "are we not going to preach?" "We have done so already," replied the saint. It was the religious reserve which they had used in walking through the streets, which he considered to be an excellent sermon for the whole town. And, in

(207) This anecdote has not been found among the authors of the Order, but it is very characteristic of S. Francis. Besides, Wading, who made an exact perquisition into the actions and sayings of the blessed Patriarch, admits that he has not collected all, and expresses his hopes to be able to make fresh discoveries. Opusc. S. Franc. pag. 523 and 524.

(208) This translation is by the Abbé Regnier des Marais of the French Academy, whose writings on all subjects are very good; but who has excelled in this translation. The Practice of Christian Perfection, 2nd. Part 2nd. Treatise, on Modesty and on Silence, cap. i pag. 120 in quarto: or page 155 of the third vol. of the new edition with augmentations, in 6 vols. 18mo. which has been printed by Seguin the elder.

fact, a mortified and humble exterior, leads the people to piety and a contempt of the world, and excites to compunction for sin; and to raising the heart and desires to heavenly objects. It is a mute exhortation, which has often more effect than the most eloquent and sublime sermons.

To example and precept, the holy patriarch added frequent and fervent prayers for the spiritual advancement of his children; well knowing that neither he who plants, nor he who waters, contribute to the fruit which the tree bears, but that the interior virtue which fructifies, comes from God (209). In fine, in order not to be wanting in anything which might be in his power; when his infirmities absolutely prevented his watching over the conduct of his children, he unceasingly exhorted the superiors to fulfill this duty with exactness, and he enforced it by the following powerful motive; that if one of the brethren should be lost by their fault, they would be accountable for him to Jesus Christ at the day of judgment. He gave them to understand by that, that after having been the cause of the loss of souls, they had nothing more to expect from Him who had redeemed them with His Blood. The superiors, indeed, should often meditate on what St. Paul says, "They who are established to govern, must watch as being to render an account for souls;" (210) that is to say, that their duty is to watch, that their ministry requires this vigilance; and these words which the Lord addresses to the pastors of Israel, by the

(209) 1 Cor. iii. 7. (210) Hebr. xiii. 17.

mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity.....he shall die, because thou hast not given him warning.....but I will require his blood at thy hand," (211) are principally meant for the heads of companies, for those who lord it over others by dignities, by authority; if by their bad example, by negligence, or by weakness, they introduce or uphold relaxation; what will they say when God shall demand of them, as of the city of Jerusalem, after all Juda had been transported to a foreign land: "Where is the flock that was given thee, that beautiful flock? What wilt thou say when He whall visit thee? for thou hast taught them to fight against thee, and instructed them against thy own head." (212) "Let negligent pastors listen to this," exclaims St. Jerome, "those, who instead of protecting their flock, teach the devils to worry them cruelly." (213)

The ardent zeal which animated St. Francis in procuring the perfection of his brethren, comported in him with the tenderest feelings of charity; he always spoke to them mildly, affectionately, and impressively. If he censured them, it was not as a judge, but as a father, without irritation, without raising his voice, with that tranquillity of manner, which showed at once the extent of his understanding, and the calmness of his heart. The apostolical authority with which he was invested, and the paternal affection he manifested,

(211) Ezech. iii. 20. (212) Jerem. xiii. 20 and 21.
(213) S. Hier. in cap. xiii. Jerem.

conciliated so entirely the veneration and love of his children, that they obeyed him punctually in all things, and they even met his wishes the moment they became aware of them.

If any one of them was tempted to quit the order, he used every effort to retain him, and when the spirit of repentance brought such an one back, he received him most mercifully. One of these asked his leave to quit; the Saint replied that he neither could nor ought to grant such a permission; he explained to him the misery to which he would expose himself by taking such a step, that it would be to give up heaven for the sake of the world, and for man, Jesus Christ Himself, who had suffered so greatly for the love of us, insomuch that all the labours and sufferings in the religious state are insufficient to mark our gratitude for it. This religious was so violently tempted, that he remained inflexible in his bad purpose. He addressed himself to Cardinal Hugolin, the protector of the order, and to the Pope; the one and the other having refused his request, he threw off his habit and went away. He was not far from the convent, when a man whom he met, said in a tone of contempt, "Wretch, whither art thou going?" What business is it of yours whither I am going?" replied the other in a passion, "and why do you meddle in this?" The man showed his feet, his hands, and his side, in which there were wounds fresh and bleeding, and said, at the same time, "You may judge from these wounds which I suffered on the cross for love of you, how much I am concerned in what you are doing.

After such a mark of love, and such goodness, do you carry your ingratitude so far as to forsake Me for a perishable and worthless world?" The affrighted fugitive, penetrated by this scene, and by the words addressed to him, prostrated himself at the feet of Jesus Christ, and humbly asked forgiveness of his fault. He then went to seek for Francis, who received him with kindness, and desired him to keep before his eyes, as long as he lived, the signal favour done him by this marvellous apparition. He profited so effectively from it, that he became quite perfect, and died in the odour of sanctity.

Another who wished to go into his own country to see his parents, asked permission of his superiors for this purpose, and set out without having obtained it. He was not long on his way before he found himself overpowered with sleep. He sat down under a tree, and in sleeping he saw Francis, who, reprimanding him severely, urged him to return. As he obstinately refused, the Saint gave him some sharp blows, which woke him, and he found the marks of them on his body. This correction having brought him to his senses, he returned to the convent, and related what had happened to him, and showed the proofs of it. The severity of the Father, which had no other ground work but kindness to the individual, was very salutary to his disciple.

The tenderness of his heart was most observable towards those who were weak, or suffering from temptations. He pitied their afflictions, as a mother would have done, and procured them all

the consolation in his power. One of his disciples having come to beg his prayers that he might not succumb to a violent temptation against purity. "My son," he said, "do not lose confidence, and be not discouraged, as if you were worse than others, because the devil tempts you; it is, on the contrary, for that very reason that you should believe yourself to be a servant of God. No one becomes perfect in his service, without having suffered these sort of tribulations. If any one boasts of not having any to endure, he should know that God permits this to assist his weakness; for God is faithful,(214) and will not suffer us to be tempted (215) above our strength. He seldom exposes to

(214) 1 Cor. x. 13.

(215) This is grounded on a principle laid down by Saint Augustin and by the Council of Trent: "God commands nothing which is impossible; but in commanding He warns us to do all we can, and to ask for what we cannot do; and he grants His aid in order to enable us to fulfil His command." From whence it follows, that since it is His will that we should resist temptations, He furnishes us when necessary, the requisite aid for overcoming them; commanding us also not to presume on our own strength, to address ourselves to Him and faithfully to respond to His grace. S. August. De Nat. et Grat. cap. xlviii. Conc. Trid. sess. 6. cap. xi. In consequence of this orthodox doctrine, Pope Innocent X., by his Constitution of the last day of May, 1653, declared the following proposition, which is the first of five taken from the book of Jansenius, to be rash, impious, blasphemous and heretical, and he anathematizes it: "Some commandments of God are impossible to the just, even when they are willing and strive to accomplish them, according to the strength they have actually, and the grace by which these commands might be rendered possible to them." On the same principle, the Faculty of Theology of Paris in the General Assembly held at the Sorbonne on the last day of January, 1556, and confirmed on the first day of February of the same year, declared the second proposition contained in the second letter written by Arnauld, doctor of Sorbonne, to a Duke and Peer of France expressed in the following terms, to be rash, impious, blasphemous, heretical and anathematized: "Nevertheless, my Lord Duke, this great truth, grounded on the Gospel, and attested by the Fathers of the Church, who show us a just man in the person of S. Peter, to whom grace, without which we are not equal to anything, had been

great struggles any but those who are of perfect virtue."

A spiritual and interior temptation of a more malignant character than a temptation of the flesh, had for a long time assailed another of his disciples, who threw himself at his feet, and opened the cause of his suffering to him. The good shepherd raised up his feeble sheep, took him in his arms, and knowing by a supernatural revelation the anguish he was in, said, compassionately to him, "My son, be not afraid; this will only be the means of giving you an increase of grace." And then, raising his voice, and speaking authoritatively, he addressed these words to the demons: "Evil spirits, I forbid you making any further attack upon this brother of mine." The temptation immediately ceased, and the religious felt himself freed. Can it be thought surprising that God gives the power of commanding the evil spirits to such eminent charity!

There was one who had a very timid conscience, and was constantly agitated by scruples; Francis censured him in the first instance paternally, for not treating with contempt and with more courage and severity the artifices which the devil made use of for his annoyance. He then ordered him not to take any notice of those things which caused him such heavy scruples, and not to plague himself by confessing them, and thus get rid of

wanting, at a time when it cannot be said he did not sin, has become all at once the Calvinistic heresy, if we are to believe the disciples of Molina. This letter had been published at Paris in Arnauld's name in the year 1655.

the confusion, which is the consequence of entering into those explanations to several confessors. "And, moreover," he added, "I believe, that unless some consent has been given, it is advantageous for the conscience, that these vain suggestions should not be made the subject of confession, which I think in your case in particular." The religious followed this salutary advice, and he found it of so much utility, that although he continued to have a timid conscience, he was no longer troubled with scruples.

Theologians, and the masters of spiritual life, have given the same remedy in cases of scruples. If it was extensively used there would not be so many persons, devotees and religious, to tire their confessors by useless declarations as to bad thoughts which come across them, and as to sins which they imagine themselves to have committed, because they do not distinguish between involuntary thoughts, and formal assent.

There are also other remedies which are given for the disease of scruples; but the most efficacious in the opinion of St. Antoninus, Gerson, and other theologians, is for a scrupulous person to go always to the same confessor, and submit implicitly to his view, and practise literally whatever he prescribes, being fully convinced that he cannot sin while so doing. Without this obedience, the evil is incurable, and may have the worst consequences both for the body and soul. Let such, then, imitate the Friar Minor, who obeyed St. Francis and was cured.

However, the advice the Saint gave this Friar

Minor must not be abused, that of not confessing vain suggestions, which bring on scruples; because this has relation to souls who are purely scrupulous, who, having a horror of sin, endeavour seriously to be virtuous. But as for those persons who are tepid and indifferent, who form for themselves a conscience favourable to the dispositions of their heart, and treat as scruples the confession of certain thoughts and certain actions, which are at least of a very equivocal nature; these persons have reason to fear, that what they consider as nothing, and do not mention in confession, may perhaps be what God reckons as sins, which ought to be confessed with great exactness.

St. Francis being ill at Assisi, cured a spiritual wound of a more serious nature than that of a scruple. One of his children, named Ricer, of Bologna, provincial in the Marches of Ancona, a man of a very saintly life, had taken it into his head, at the suggestion of the devil, that the patriarch hated him, because he knew that he was to be damned, and he came to Assisi in the hopes that this thought would be dissipated, if the Saint should receive him kindly. The Saint, who had a revelation as to the state of his mind, and of his arrival at Assisi, said to Brothers Massé and Leo, "Go and meet Brother Ricer, embrace him, and kiss him from me, and tell him, that among all my brethren in the world, I love him the most tenderly." They executed the commission given them, and Ricer found himself strengthened in his faith, and filled with joy; and thanked God for the happy success of his journey. As soon as he

appeared, Francis, weak as he was, ran to him, and embracing him, said, with paternal affection, "Ricer, my dear son, you are, among all our brethren, him whom I love from the bottom of my heart;" and after having made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, he gave him several kisses, and then added, "Ricer, my dear child, this temptation was visited upon you for your greater good. But if you do not choose to be a gainer at this price, you will henceforward suffer no more from this temptation, nor from any other," and from that time he never had another.

The authors who mention this anecdote, say that Ricer was strengthened in his faith at the moment that the companions embraced him from St. Francis, because the temptation which induced him to think he was to be damned, attacked his faith. 1. Faith teaches us (216) that neither reprobation, nor predestination, can be known except by revelation; now, there was no solid ground for believing that the Saint had received any communication from heaven relative to Ricer. 2. The Church teaches us,(217) that, according to Catholic faith, all those who are baptised, must believe that Jesus Christ gives them such aid as is necessary for the accomplishment of all that is requisite for salvation, if they are willing to labour faithfully for its attainment; consequently, that He died for them,(218) and that God desires

(216) Eccles. ix. 1.

(217) These words are found in the twenty-fifth chapter of the second Council of Orange, which has been received by the whole Church.

(218) The Abbé Tournely proves clearly from texts of the Holy Scrip-

that they should be saved. 3. St. Augustin (219) lays it down as certain, that God does not abandon those who are once justified by His grace, if He be not first abandoned; and the Council of Trent (220) has adopted the same truth, using the very words of the holy doctor.

This, then, is sufficient to allay the anxiety of such of the faithful whose minds may be made uneasy on the subject of predestination, in consequence of certain passages of the Holy Scriptures, of some expressions of the holy fathers, and of some theological opinions. In fact, since it is clearly revealed, and the Church obliges us to believe, that Jesus Christ died for us, that God desires our salvation, that He gives us the means to work this out, and that He is not the first to abandon us; we must absolutely conclude, in the first place, that whatsoever may be in the Scriptures apparently opposed to these truths, does not counteract them, but may be reconciled to them, because truths cannot be in opposition to each other. In the second place, the holy fathers, on those points on which the Church receives their testimony as the channel of tradition, can have said nothing contravening these truths. In

tures, from the Councils which have condemned the predestinarian heretics, from the doctrine of the Council of Trent, from the Constitutions of Popes Innocent X. and Alexander VII. who condemned the fifth proposition of Jansenius as impious and heretical, from the authority of the Holy Fathers, and particularly from that of Saint Augustine, that every faithful is bound to believe that God desires his salvation, and that Jesus Christ died for him. Prælect. Theol. de Deo, Tom. 1, quæst. 17 art. 10, concl. 2, page 321, et seq.

(219) S. Aug. de Nat. and Grat. cap. xxvi, et alibi.

(220) Conc. Trid. sess. 6, cap. ii.

the third place, the Church only allows in the schools diversities of opinion on the subject of the mystery of predestination, inasmuch as they are in accordance with these same truths, to which we must always recur.

Theological systems which should depart from these truths, would no longer be simply systems, but confirmed heresies, which the Church would condemn as it has already condemned them. If there are some opinions in the Catholic schools which it seems difficult to understand, and the explanations of which are unsatisfactory, it must be attributed to the weakness of the human mind, which must speak very imperfectly of what God has not revealed, and as to which we must exclaim with St. Paul: "Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God!" (221) We must not, however, blame the theologians; for they are in some measure compelled by the blasphemies of the heretics, "to elevate themselves to what is inaccessible, to explain what is ineffable, and to do what is not permitted to be done." (222) These are the words of St. Hilary, writing on the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity against the Arians.

After all that St. Augustine had written against the Pelagians, and the semi-Pelagians, he addressed the faithful in these consoling words: "You must daily ask the Father of Light, from whom comes every good and perfect gift,(223) the grace of per-

(221) Rom. xi. 33.

(222) S. Hilary de Trin. lib. 2. n. 2.

(223) James i. 17.

severance in His obedience, and have confidence, that in so doing, you will obtain His predestination ;... .....for He directs you to place your hopes in Him." (224) God has hidden from us the mystery of predestination, in order to humble us, and to compel us to perpetual watchfulness ; and this is the reason why the Council of Trent (225) says, that no one can be perfectly sure of persevering to the end, and of being of the number of the predestined ; but it adds, in the idea of St. Paul,(226) that all should entertain a firm reliance on the assistance of God, who will complete and make perfect the good work He has begun, giving them the will and means to put it in force, unless they themselves be wanting to His grace. Now, as we have every reason to fear this being wanting, the same council cautions us according to the words of the apostles, and of St. Augustin,(227) to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because, not having it in our power either to will or to do good for heaven, unless by the aid of grace, we must be fearful of becoming unworthy of it by our negligence or by our pride ; and, moreover, because God may justly call us out of this world as soon as we may have committed a mortal sin. On the part of God, there is great confidence of our salvation ; on our part, great room for fear ; the one and the other should

(224) S. Augus. de dono persev. cap. xxxii, n. 62.

(225) Conc. Trid. sess. 6, cap. xii and xiii.

(226) Phil. i, 6.

(227) Phil. ii, 12, 13. S. Aug. de Nat. et Grat. cap. xxvii. n. 31. et cap. xxxii. n. 36. De Corrept. et Grat. cap. ix. n. 24.

induce the practice recommended by St. Peter: "Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure, for doing these things, you shall not sin at any time;" (228) that is to say, you will not fall into any considerable faults, which shall cause you to fall from your vocation, and from your election.

May it please the Divine Mercy, that the temptation of a disciple of St. Francis on this head may serve to instruct and console such pious persons who are suffering under similar temptations; and to disabuse those who, misconceiving the sense of the Scriptures, of the Fathers, and of theologians, are afraid that God does not sincerely wish to save them, will not afford them the means, and may even abandon them, although they may make every exertion to serve him; which feelings are not only heretical and impious, but are the source of licentiousness and the principle of despair.

The holy patriarch had so tender a love for his brethren, that he could not bear that a shade of sorrowfulness should pass over their minds, lest they should lose their spiritual joy; "My dear brethren," he said to them, "entertain interiorly and exteriorly the holy joy which God gives. When His servants seek to obtain and preserve this spiritual joy, which has its source in purity of hearts, in the fervour of prayer, and in other virtuous practices, the devils can do them no injury; and they say, 'We can do no injury to these servants of God, we have no entry to them,

(228) 2 Peter, i, 10.

they are always joyful whether in tribulation or prosperity.' But they are highly gratified when they can deprive them of this happy temper of mind, or, at least, lessen its intensity; because, if they can succeed in instilling any of their own venom into them, they will soon turn what has only the breadth of a hair into a beam, by adding something by little and little; unless we endeavour to destroy their work by the virtue of prayer, of contrition, of confession and satisfaction. For this reason, my brethren, since spiritual joy comes from purity of conscience and the frequent exercise of fervent prayer, labour principally to acquire these two blessings, in order that you should possess it; I am very anxious to see it in you, and to feel it in myself. It is for the devil and his satellites to be sorrowful, but as to us, we must always rejoice in the Lord."

Although the holy man had occasionally reason to be sorrowful, in consequence of the temptations to which he was exposed, or from the fear of the pains of hell arising from the remembrance of his sins, yet he was ever gay. He was one day asked the reason of this, and he gave this answer: "My sins sometimes, indeed, make me very sorrowful, (229) and Satan would wish to imprint this sadness on me, in order to make me fall into slothfulness and weariness; but when that occurs, I look on my companion; the spiritual

(229) This, then, must have been before God had revealed to him that his sins had been entirely remitted, and that he would enjoy eternal life. At least, the sorrow which they caused him after these two revelations could not have been accompanied by any fear of the pains of Hell.

joy I see in him, renews mine, and the temptation passes off. My joy is a torment to the devils, for they envy me the favours I receive from God. I know and see that when they cannot injure me by making me sorrowful, they endeavour to strip their spiritual joy from my companions, and if they cannot succeed either with them or with me, they retire in confusion."

We must notice in this answer of the holy father, two sorts of sorrow ; the one arising from the anguish caused by sin, of which St. Paul says, "That it is according to God, and works penance unto salvation." (230) This does not do away with spiritual joy, on the contrary, it produces it ; nothing is sweeter, or more consoling, than the tears shed from the impulse of sincere contrition. The other sorrow is a depression of spirits brought about by the devil, who endeavours to render us tepid and sluggish, to give us a disgust for pious exercises, and induce us to give them up. A good conscience causes spiritual joy. No one has truly cause to rejoice, but he who is well with God, faithful to His law, and submissive to His will. A tranquil mind, free and disengaged from the tyranny of the passions, is in the opinion of Wisdom, a continual feast.(231)

It is true happiness, "For a happy life is nothing more," says St. Augustin, (232) "than the joy which is found in truth, that is, in God, who is truth, the sweet light of our souls, our salva-

(230) 2 Cor. vii. 10. (231) Prov. xv. 15.

(232) S. Aug. conf. lib. 10. cap. xxiii.

tion and our repose." Therefore, David (233) excites the just of Israel to manifest their joy, and St. Paul said to the Christians,(234) "Rejoice always in the Lord ; I say again rejoice. What constitutes the kingdom of God is the justice, peace, and joy which comes from the Holy Spirit."

This disposition of the heart enables it to resist the evil spirit, according to the words of Esdras to the Jewish people: "The joy of the Lord is our strength." (235) What can the evil spirit do against a soul whose sole pleasure is to serve God, who has no other solace than to love and praise Him ? There is, moreover, nothing which makes so great an impression on the people of the world, as witnessing the interior contentment of a truly good man, which is seen in the serenity of his countenance. This is, according to St. Augustin, (236) what compels them to admit, that they themselves have not true joy, but that is reserved for God's servants. What could have been said of St. Francis and his brethren, ever gay and joyous, though worn down by austerities ?

It was not alone by the ardour of his zeal and the tenderness of his affection, that the holy founder led on his brethren ; but by a wonderful discretion and prudence in the government of his order.

Although he used every endeavour to induce his religious to live austerely, he, nevertheless,

(233) Psalm xxxi 14 et alibi, passim.

(234) Phil. iv. 4. Rom. xiv. 17.

(235) Esdr. viii. 10.

(236) S. Aug. in Psalm xcvii. n. 19.

recommended them to be guided by moderation, and he did not countenance indiscreet penances.

Brother Sylvester, the first priest in his order, having fallen into an illness of languor, brought on by excess in his mortifications, had a wish to eat some grapes, Francis having been informed of it, hastened to procure him this relief. He took him, as well as he could, into the vineyard of one of his friends, which was near the convent, and having made him sit down near a plant of vine, he blessed it, and ordered him to eat the grapes, and ate some with him. As soon as the sick man had eaten of them, he found himself perfectly cured, and he frequently afterwards related the circumstance to his brethren with tears in his eyes, as a proof of the love the holy father bore to his children; it was also an effect of his discretion, for disapproving of Sylvester's excessive austerities, he chose that he should take this sort of remedy, which nature seemed to call for, and it pleased God to render this the subject of a miracle.

This prudent and charitable father, came to know one night, that one of his children who had fasted too rigidly, could not take any repose in consequence of the hunger which oppressed him; not to leave him in so dangerous a state, he sent for him, offered him some bread, and pressed him to eat of it, eating some himself first, to give him confidence. The religious got over the shyness he at first felt, and took the nourishment he so greatly required; being well pleased to have been relieved from the peril his life was in, by the pru-

dence and kindnes of the Saint, and to see so edifying an example. In the morning Francis assembled his brethren, and having told them what had occurred in the night: "Brethren," he said, "take a precedent from this, not as to what I sate, but that I had recourse to what was charitable. Then he pointed out to them, that virtue should always have discretion for its rule and for its guide; not that discretion which the flesh inspires, but that which has been taught by Jesus Christ, whose most holy life is the finished model of all perfection.

"Let each man," he contined, "have regard to his constitution. If some of you are strong enough to support life well, while eating very little, I do not wish on that account, that one, who requires more nourishment, shall imitate them in this respect; such a one might give his body what is necessary for it; for, as in eating we are obliged to avoid whatever is superfluous, which is hurtful to the body and soul, so also we must guard against excessive abstinence, and the more so because the Lord requires mercy rather than sacrifice. This is what God says by the Prophet Osee, (237) which means, that He prefers the practice of works of mercy to our neighbour to the exterior exercise of religion; and that this worship which must be rendered him, is not pleasing to Him without mercy. Now, as we are commanded to love our neighbour with a love of charity, St. Thomas teaches us, as does St. Augus-

(237) Osee. vi. 6.

tin, (238) that the same love obliges us to have a similar regard for our own body; from whence it follows, that this charity not being found in immoderate abstinence, God does not approve of the sacrifice. To this we may add, that it is sometimes the devil who instigates a person to undertake immoderate fasting, in order to render that person incapable of spiritual exercises, and for other evil intentions."

The holy founder cautioned his brethren to avoid excess in fasting even more than excess in eating, because he knew that they were all animated by the spirit of mortification. Their fervour was so great, that in fasting very rigorously, they at the same time wore iron girdles, coats of mail, coarse hair shirts, and took severe disciplines, which brought on frequent illnesses. For this reason he often recommended discretion to them. "My brethren," he said, "if a servant of God gives his body what is reasonable for its nourishment and for its repose, and that the body is nevertheless sluggish, lazy, sleepy at prayer, in watchings, and other good works, it must then be chastised, and treated as a horse that refuses to work, or an ass that won't go on, although they are well fed. But if the body is deprived of its real wants, it is disabled from bearing the yoke of penance, and performing the functions required by the soul; it has then every right to complain."

We shall perhaps be surprised that St. Francis,

(238) S. Aug. de Doct. Christ. lib. 1. cap. xxvi. S. Thom. 2a. 2æ. quæst. 25. art. 5.

who preaches discretion so admirably to his brethren, should have carried his own austerities to excess ; but we must bear in mind, that he was a man, guided in all things by the Holy Spirit, in whom God was pleased to show the abundant riches of His grace, and whose prodigious penitential exercises were to draw down an abundance of mercy on sinners. Thus, what appears excessive in his mortifications, arose from his perfect fidelity to the extraordinary impulse he received from above, and this was true prudence.

Fervent persons are occasionally found who would wish to imitate the fastings and other austerities of the saints, but this is presumption, unless they are called thereto by God, and that this vocation has been well sounded and approved by legitimate authority. The general and safe maxim in cases of austerities, is not to undertake anything extraordinary, without the consent of superiors and confessors. Before granting any permission of this nature, the constitution and character of the person must be carefully examined, and enquiry minutely made whether the applicant practises regularly the ordinary mortifications, and if he is as zealous in controlling his passions, and acquiring the virtues requisite in his station, as for the maceration of his body ; for it is often found, that those who solicit extraordinary penances, neglect those which are ordinary and common, and who, in mortifying their bodies, do not take sufficient pains to purify their hearts, to become humble, obedient, mild, and charitable.

The lessons which St. Francis gave on the subject of discretion, are of no great use in the world. There, it is rather requisite to repeat these words of our Saviour: "Be careful of yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down by intemperance," (249) and those of St. Paul: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God," (240) Those even who endeavour to mortify themselves, often experience the truth of what the apostle says: "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and taketh care of it." (241) St. Augustin (242) found it very difficult to satisfy the wants of the body, without giving somewhat unto sensuality; and he says, that he had daily combats with temptations of that kind. St. Bernard (243) admits, that we owe it to our body to preserve it in health, but he adds, that on the score of health, sensuality lays dangerous snares for us, and that in so artful and subtle a manner, that it is difficult for us to preserve ourselves from them, and sometimes even to perceive them. We must, therefore, as St. Francis remarks, not have that false and dangerous discretion which is inspired by the flesh, and flatters the senses.

It may not, perhaps, be believed, that the holy patriarch carried his discretion and condescension even to the buildings and the habits; he who advocated extreme poverty on these two articles. He had carefully recommended to his brethren, to

(239) Luke, xxi. 24. (240) Rom. xii, 1.

(241) Ephes. v. 29.

(242) S. August. Confess. lib. 10. cap. xxxi.

(243) S. Bern. de Divin. serm. 6. n. 21.

build only small low houses, surrounded only by hedges, in remote and solitary situations; but, as his own companions tell us, he admitted that in towns, and near towns, it was proper to act otherwise; that in consequence of the number of religious who were there for the service of the faithful, it was necessary to have the convent surrounded by walls.

The multiplicity of vestments greatly displeased him, he could not bear stuffs that were soft and downy; he said (249) that coarseness and roughness in their habits were necessary for his institute, and for preaching repentance. Nevertheless, besides allowing two tunics by the rule, and giving permission to wear shoes in cases of necessity, he enjoins the ministers to provide carefully for the clothing of the other brethren, as they may deem it requisite, taking into consideration the time and place, and cold countries; and for this purpose to have recourse to their spiritual friends, that is to say, as has been already remarked, to persons in good circumstances, friends of the institute, whom they may solicit to pay for the material which they may only receive as an alms. This was a measure to which he was greatly adverse, because of the dislike he had to money in any shape, and he only permitted it for the wants of the sick and the clothing of the brethren, and this is a proof of his discretion, which is shown even in the ardent love he had for poverty; it would be impossible to form a more correct idea of it than from this.

(244) Reg. Fratr. Min. cap. ii. et iv.

His companions also say that he allowed those who required it to wear a softer and warmer tunic; on this sole condition, however, that the outward garment should be very poor to keep up the spirit of humility, by the contempt the world entertains for such as are poorly clothed. Finally, the same authors testify that although he was very austere from the moment of his conversion to his death, with a constitution very delicate and weak, yet he prudently moderated the austerities of his brethren, and that many things which he rigidly refused himself he allowed to the others from discretion and from charity. This, indeed, is characteristic in the saints; severe and inflexible to themselves, they spared their neighbours, and were indulgent in their regard; while hypocrites, such as the Pharisees, and certain heretics who resemble them, (245) put heavy burthens on the shoulders of others, which they are unable to carry; overwhelm with austerities those whom they direct, often for the most trifling faults, while they themselves live in comfort and at their ease.

The discretion of St. Francis was apparent in every part of his conduct. Bernard de Besse, one of the writers of his life, and secretary to St. Bonaventura, says, that he never spoke to his brethren but in terms of moderation and mildness, that he compassionated the weak, and encouraged the young in the practice of virtue; that he had great respect for old age; that whatever faults a priest might commit, he never reprimanded him

(245) Math. xxiii. 4.

but in private ; in fine, that he had proper consideration for all those whose birth, merit, or dignity required it.

Brother Guy, who was beatified by the Holy See, and of whom we have before spoken, begged the Saint to allow him to build a cell in the fissure of a rock which was opposite to the convent of Celles, near Cortona, in order that he might live there in great solitude, and give himself up to contemplation. Francis, who knew that Guy, although he was only in the noviciate, had the virtue of the ancients, and would raise himself up to an eminent degree of sanctity, permitted him this peculiar retreat, but upon this condition, that it was not to prevent him from attending all the offices said by the community, in order to preserve the uniformity of the observance, and to obviate the illusion which might mix itself up with unusual practices. This was also what the Saint himself practised ; he quitted regularly his contemplation, to join in singing the praises of God in community.

One of the brethren asked him, in his last illness, why he had given up the government of the community, and why he allowed many things, contrary to what he had taught his first companions ? The question was displeasing to him, but he gave this answer :—

" Some are surprised that I do not correct the defects which exist in the order, and they wish to know the reason of it. May God pardon them, for they oppose me ; they pretend to put a task on me, which concerns me no longer. As long as

I was the superior of my brethren, and that they continued firm in their vocation, I was sufficient for them by my example, by my exhortations, and by my minute attentions, although from the beginning of my conversion I was very weak. But when I saw that God had permitted them to increase in number, and that there were some whose fervour diminished, and who began to pursue other ways, without paying attention to my example, or to the engagements they had entered into ; I gave up the guidance of the Order to God, and to the ministers. At the general chapter, I pleaded my infirmities as the motive of renunciation ; however, if all my brethren had wished to conform to my views, and had also desired for their benefit and consolation, not to have any other superior than myself until my death, I also would have wished it, on account of the advantage it would have been to them, and to me; it, likewise, would give me so much pleasure, that even in the bed to which illness would have confined me, I would have applied myself to everything which could have been satisfactory to them ; there is no great trouble in guiding inferiors who are very submissive. The post of superior is an employment wholly spiritual, which consists, as to what respects evil, in preventing it, or in correcting it by example and by cautioning. If these be insufficient, I will not have recourse to measures of rigour, as the powers of the world. I have, nevertheless, that firm confidence in God, that He who punishes in this world and in the next, by invisible enemies, will make use of them to punish lukewarm and

sluggish brethren ; inasmuch as those who execute the Divine justice, will stir up worldlings to reproach them with their lukewarmness, and induce them, by the shame and confusion they will be made to feel, to return to their duty. As to myself, I shall not cease to my last breath, to instruct them by my example, to advance in the path the Lord has pointed out to me, as I have already taught them by my actions and by my words. If they do not profit by this, they are inexcusable, and I shall no longer have to give an account of their conduct to God."

The complaints of the Saint regarded Elias, and some of the provincial ministers, who followed his spirit of relaxation in what regarded poverty. The remedy which it seemed feasible to adapt for the evil, was to depose Elias, and the ministers who were his adherents ; but, besides that, the holy Patriarch was too infirm to have it in his power to act, God had revealed to him that he was to place Elias as Vicar General and leave him in that situation. It was a surprising and impenetrable decree of Providence, but one which His servant was bound to adore, and act up to. In this situation, prudence did not permit him to do more than caution, exhort, threaten, give good example, and implore the aid of Heaven.

He said most truly, that worldlings are incited by invisible enemies to censure religious for their relaxations. In fact, generally speaking, they are the most worldly who speak with greatest bitterness of the faults of religious persons, and we may well imagine that it is at the instigation of the

devil, for they only speak of these faults to spread them and to disparage a state of holiness, which of itself bears witness to the irregularity of a worldly life. They attribute to the whole order, whatever they deem blameable in any one of its members; they magnify everything, excuse nothing, and often fancy evil where none exists. The broachers of new opinions do the same in respect to the religious, who expose and controvert their unsound doctrine, as the Friars Minors have done for the last six hundred years, and still do on all occasions. But what is only sheer malice in the devil, in worldlings and in heretics, must be considered in the dispositions of divine Providence as a means of making known to all religious, that motives of decorum, of honour, and of edification are joined to those of the love of God, and of their own salvation, to bind them faithfully to fulfil the duties of their state of life.

The earliest authors who wrote the Life of St. Francis, have recorded one of his answers which shows to what a degree he possessed the art of governing. They spoke to him one day of some of the provincial ministers, who, animated with the spirit of Brother Elias, arrogated to themselves the government of the provinces, as a sort of hereditary tenure, and pretended to perpetuate themselves therein; so that they could not be brought back to the condition of an inferior, without giving them great offence, and putting it in their power to give the community great trouble. "Let them live as they like," the Saint replied, angrily, "a time will come when they will repent

it, the loss of some is a lesser evil, than the loss of many. If it was attempted to depose these ministers they would excite great disturbance, and that would be a scandal to the good religious, who now obey simply and peaceably.

Deposition is certainly what these provincials deserved, since, according to the maxims of the Holy Fathers, it is sufficient to take steps to attain ecclesiastical dignities, and even merely to wish for them, to be rendered unworthy to hold them. Moreover, to pretend to hold an office of right and to keep it in perpetuity, to take measures for always being in command, and never obeying, in a profession which is profoundly humble, is something absolutely monstrous. We must nevertheless admit that St. Francis was extremely prudent in not deposing these ambitious ministers, in order to avoid trouble and scandal. St. Augustine(246) says, that we should put up with certain evils, when they can only be remedied by a greater evil; as in the case of the husbandman, who would not permit the tares to be eradicated, lest in so doing the wheat should be injured. Such is the course pursued by superior minds who follow the instigations of prudence, and are guided by the principles of good government. Little minds who are zealous, and are in possession of authority, wish at any cost, to do away with everything that is evil; and not satisfied with what is good, they insist upon having some-

(246) S. August. contra Epist. Parmen. lib. iii. n. cap. ii. n. 13. et seq. et alibi. Math. xiii. 29.

thing better; without reflecting that amongst men there are inevitable evils which must be submitted to patiently, and that sometimes by indiscreetly insisting upon having what is better, the good itself is destroyed.

These words of St. Francis on the governing provincials are very remarkable: "Let them live as they like: a time will come when they will repent of so doing;" as if he had said: "I let them do this, because I cannot hinder them, and I have no hopes of converting them. They follow now the desires of their heart, but they will one day appear before God, and the sentence which will be passed upon them will be followed by a bitter, but fruitless repentance." In fact the pride which gives birth to ambition, is one of those vices of the mind of which the prophet says, that "it ascendeth continually;"(247) and St. Thomas says that it removes us extremely from God. This is the reason why the heretical innovators, who only dogmatise through pride, are seldom converted. The conversion of the ambitious is equally rare. Whenever pride induces them to love dignities and honours, they never cease from longing for them, to seek for them, and to flatter themselves that they are more deserving of them than any others, to procure them and retain them till their last moments. Now if the Holy Ghost assures us, that in general "a more severe judgment shall be for them that rule; that to him who is little, mercy is granted, but that the mighty shall be mightily tormented;"(248)

(247) Psalm lxxiii, 24. 2â. 2æ. Quest. 73. art. 5.

(248) Sap. vi. 6, et 7.

what a dreadful consideration is not this in particular for those who acquire command through ambition, to whom, what the Council of Trent says as to Churches which are governed by bishops: "They are onerous places, capable of making angels tremble.(249) It would be very useless to repeat in Hell with those sinners of whom the Wise man speaks: "In what has our pride served us? All has passed over as a shadow."(250)

The holy Patriarch, being on his death-bed, was asked his opinion as to the qualifications which his successor ought to have, and he explained himself as follows:

"My dear children, I see no one who has all these qualifications requisite for being the leader of so large an army, and pastor of so numerous and widely spread a flock. But I will draw a portrait from which you will see what sort of a person such a chief, and such a pastor should be.

"He should be a man of serious character, very discreet, of good repute; exempt from any particular attachments, lest the friendships he might have for some might give scandal to others. A man of prayer, devoted to this holy exercise, yet who so distributes his time that he may have certain hours for himself, and others for his flock. In the early morning he should offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and employ a considerable portion of time in soliciting the protection of the

(249) Conc. Trid. sess. 6. cap. i. de Reform.

(250) Sap. v. 8. et 9.

Almighty for himself and for his flock, with the deepest sentiments of piety. After his prayers, let him receive all persons, and answer for all things, but let him make no distinction of persons, and let him pay as much attention to the most simple, as to the learned and wise. If he himself has the gift of knowledge, let him nevertheless be simple in his conduct, manifesting much patience and humility; let him encourage these virtues in others, as well as in himself; let him continually exercise himself in them and lead his brethren to their practice, more by his example than by discourse.

"As to what concerns money, let him hold it in execration, for there is nothing that can sooner introduce corruption into our Order. Never let him make a bad use of any purse, he who is the head, and should be the model to others. Let him be satisfied with one habit for himself, with one book in which he may register the affairs of the Order, with one inkstand, and a seal to affix to the documents he may have to send out. He must not be anxious to collect many books lest in giving up too much time to reading, he should take too much from the duties of his office.

"Let his heart be full of compassion for the afflicted; let him afford them every consolation, since he is their last resource; if he did not hit on some remedy for their miseries, weakness might throw them into despair. If he meets with insolent and unruly spirits, let him humble himself in order to soften them; and to gain their

souls to Jesus Christ, let him give up some of his rights. The bowels of his compassion should be opened for such as have left the Order, as for sheep that have strayed, without ever refusing to treat them with mercy, considering that the temptations which have led to such falls must have been very great, and that if God were to permit him to be similarly attacked, he might himself fall down a still greater precipice.

"I should also wish that all the religious should honour the general, as holding the place of Jesus Christ in their regard, and that they provide for all he may require, according to the decorum of our Institution. But he must not take pleasure in being so respected, nor care for the honours which may be rendered him, no more than for the insults which may be offered him; so that the honours shall not make any change in his character, unless perhaps for the better. In case his infirmities should require more nourishing food than the rest of the community, let him not take it in private, but publicly, that the others may have no scruple of having recourse to similar indulgence when their infirmities may require it.

"His principal employment is to penetrate into the secret of hearts, and to extract the truth from its most hidden recesses. In the first place, he must look with a suspicious eye on all accusations, principally when those who bring those accusations forward are great talkers: he must not be eager in listening to them, much less in believing them, unless after careful investigation it shall be found that the accuser has spoken truth. The

strength of his mind should be such, that no desire to retain the place he fills, should induce him to violate the rules of firm and inflexible justice, nor even to relax them in any degree; but he must so order his decisions that excessive rigour shall not cause the loss of any souls, nor useless lenity, nor irresolute indulgence encourage tepidity, or enervate discipline; thus that he may make himself feared by all, and be beloved by those who fear him. All this must make him feel that his office is even more burdensome to him than honourable.

"I also am desirous that the general may have very virtuous companions, enemies of all sensible pleasures, courageous in all difficulties, and full of compassion for those who have fallen into any errors; they should love all the others equally; nor receive anything for their labour but what is absolutely necessary to support life, not longing for anything but the glory of God, the good of the order, merit for their own souls, perfection and salvation for their brethren. They should be complaisant and obliging, and should receive with a holy joy all those who come to them, so that by purity and simplicity they may exhibit in their persons the model of evangelical observance, of which they make profession in the Rule of the Order. Such, then, should be the general and his companions."

What they had asked the Saint as to the general, gave him an opportunity of stating his wishes as to the provincials. "My Brethren," he said, "it is my wish that the provincials should

be mild and kind even to the lowest; and that they should have so much benevolence that those who have fallen into faults, should have no hesitation, or fear, in casting themselves on their charity. I should also wish them to be very reserved as to giving orders, easy in pardoning offences, and more inclined to lend their aid to sinners than to load them with censure; that they should be declared enemies to vice, but that they should be as physicians to the vicious. In fine, I would wish them to be such, that their lives should be to the others a true image of regular discipline. But I require also, that all the others should have for them great respect and affection, as for those who bear the weight, and anxieties, and labour of the community, believing them to be worthy of a great reward before God, if they govern on these principles."

Do we not see herein the exalted ideas which St. Francis entertained of every sort of perfection; the great knowledge he had of the human heart, of morality and government? The penetration, solidity, and even the delicacy of his mind, his discretion and his consummate prudence in the midst of evangelical purity? We might imagine that he had read all that the holy Fathers, and St. Gregory in particular, had written so forcibly on Christian morality. The portraits he puts before us may serve as lessons to all who have authority in the Church. There is no regular superior who will not find in it an excellent rule of conduct, and those of the Friars Minors must consider it as a special favour that God had been

pleased to permit them to be instructed in their obligations by their most holy Patriarch himself.

We should be glad to put on record all his other instructions, which are not less sound, nor less spiritual; but we must confine ourselves to those which he gave on learning and on preaching, with the last letter he addressed to the religious of his order shortly before his death.

St. Bonaventura says, that some of his religious asked him one day if he thought it proper that such persons as were already learned, when they were admitted into the Order, should continue to study the Holy Scriptures? to which he replied: "This is very pleasing to me, provided they follow the example of Jesus Christ, whom we find to have prayed more than He seems to have read, and do not neglect the exercise of prayer; and provided they do not study so much to learn what they are to speak, as to practise what they have learnt, and to induce others to practise it also. I wish my brethren to be disciples of the Gospel; and that they should progress in the knowledge of truth, at the same time that they increase in simple-mindedness; thus joining, according to the method of our Divine Master, the simplicity of the dove, to the prudence of serpents."(251)

A novice, to whom the Vicar-General had allowed the particular use of a Psalter, came to solicit Francis' confirmation of this permission, and this is the reply he got: "Charlemagne, Orlando, and other great captains, rendered themselves illustrious by their exploits; the martyrs

(251) Math. x. 16.

are celebrated in the Church by their sufferings and death ; but there are others who aspire to glory by the sole reading of the feats of these persons." The Saint intended to give him to understand that no one is estimable unless by his actions and conduct, and that there is nothing more vain than a reputation grounded on fruitless science.

The novice, who did not rightly understand the drift of the answer he had received, came back some days after to ask again for the Psalter ; when Francis said to Him : "When this shall have been granted to you you will next want a Breviary, and then other books ; then you will ascend the pulpit as a great doctor, and you will imperiously require to be served by your companions." His zeal excited him—he took some ashes, and rubbing the novice's forehead with them, he repeated several times with great animation : "A Psalter for me ! a Psalter for me !" and for the instruction of the young man, who was in great astonishment, he added : "My brother, I also was tempted as you are, on the subject of books. In order to know the will of God, I had recourse to prayer, and I opened the book of the Holy Gospels, in which I found this sentence : 'to you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God ; but to the rest in parables.'(252) The application he made of this was, that the truths of the Gospel are better known by those who practise them, than by those who know them and do not put them in practice. From thence the two beautiful maxims which

(252) Luke, viii. 10.

were familiar to him: "A man has no knowledge or eloquence, but inasmuch as he acts up to what he knows and says. We see many who take great pains to acquire the other sciences, but happy is he who is satisfied with knowing Jesus Christ crucified."(253)

Doubtless the holy Patriarch wished his brethren to have Psalters and Breviaries, since they were obliged to say the Divine Office. He knew also that books were necessary for them, to enable them by study to be enabled to instruct their neighbours, according as their vocation required, and he himself read the Scriptures. But he did not approve that any one should have a book for his own peculiar use; either fearing that an idea of having property in it, should be mixed up with it, or because he remarked too great a desire for knowledge of which he feared that the consequences might be in opposition to simplicity, humility, and devotion.

The study which is entered upon more through vanity than piety, and less to gain souls to God, than to gain for themselves the praise of man, was his abhorrence. He said of those whose desire for learning was out of curiosity: "In the day of tribulation, they will find nothing in their hands. It would be better that they should labour now to improve themselves in virtue, in order to have the Lord on their side at that time: for the time will come, when books will be thrown aside as useless. I do not choose that my brethren shall be curious in learning and books; what I

(253) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

wish is that they be well grounded in humility, simplicity, prayer, and poverty our mistress. It is the only sure way of their salvation, and for the edification of their neighbour, because they are called to imitate Jesus Christ, who followed and pointed out this path. Many will forsake this path on pretence of edifying other men by their knowledge ; and it will turn out that understanding the Scriptures, by which alone they fancied themselves filled with light, devotion and the love of God, will be the cause of their remaining cold and empty. Thus in consequence of having, in pursuit of vain and useless literature, lost the time which ought to have been given to living according to the spirit of the state they had embraced, they will not have it in their power to return to their primitive vocation."

St. Francis looked upon the ministry of preaching as the most agreeable sacrifice which could be offered to the Father of Mercies ; this is also the grand idea which St. Paul entertains of it,(254) when he says: "God has given me the grace, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, sanctifying the Gospel of God, that the oblation of the Gentiles may be made acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Ghost." St. Chrysostom(255) concludes from that, that preaching is a sacrifice ; that the preacher is the priest ; that an attentive and devout audience is the victim ; that the Word of God is the sword which immolates spiritually,

(254) Rom. xv. 16.

(255) Chrys. Homil. 29 in Epist. ad Rom.

and the grace of the Holy Ghost, the fire which consumes. What exalted sentiments must not a preacher entertain in exercising this sort of priesthood! and with what spirit of devotion should not those attend who are thus holily immolated!

The blessed Father had another beautiful idea as to the ministry of the Word, and St. Bonaventura has made a particular note of it. He compared the evangelical ministers to those who, in the Ancient Law raised up posterity to their brother defunct, who had not left any.(256) According to him, this brother defunct is Jesus Christ crucified, and when a preacher makes any converts, they are the children he raises up for Him, and of whom he takes care. From this we see that the holy man made profound reflections upon passages in the Holy Scriptures which seem less appropriate to moralists, and that he found in them most edifying spiritual sentiments.

The ardour of his love for Jesus Christ, and his great zeal for the salvation of souls, made him esteem all preachers very venerable. His intention was, that some of his order should be brought up to that duty, and that they should be respected by the others, because it is they who instil life, who combat the infernal enemy, and who enlighten the world. But he desired that they should exercise their ministry in a spirit of charity, even more by example, by prayers and tears, than by eloquent discourses.

"I desire," he said, "that these ministers of the Word of God, should apply themselves solely to

(256) Deut. xxv. 5.

spiritual exercises, and let nothing turn them from them; for, as they are chosen by the great King to declare His will to the people, it is requisite that they should learn, in the privacy of prayer, what they are to make known in their sermons, and that they should be interiorly warmed, in order to make use of language which shall kindle fire in the hearts they address. Those who make use of their own lights, and who savour the truths they preach, are very praiseworthy, but it is a bad division when all is given to preaching and little or nothing to devotion. As to those who sell their labours for the oil of approbation, such as those excite our pity."

He also said, that "it was a deplorable thing to see the state of a preacher, who seeks by his discourses not the salvation of souls, but his own glory, or who destroys by his example, what he had advocated by his doctrine. A poor brother, simple and without eloquence, who, by good example, induces others to the practice of virtue, is to be preferred to him. 'She that was barren,' says a prophetess, 'has become the mother of many children, and she who had many children, finds herself barren.'(257) The barren represents the poor brother, who, not performing the functions of the minister who gives children to the Church, will nevertheless have many at the day of judgment; because then Jesus Christ, the Supreme Judge, will honourably attribute to him those whom he now converts by his prayers, which he offers up in private. She who had many

(257) Reg. ii. 1.

children and will now find herself barren, is the representative of that vain preacher, who has nothing but words. He rejoices now in having begotten many children to Jesus Christ by the eloquence of his discourses; but he will then be made aware that they belong not to him."

The holy man continued thus: "Many employ themselves solely in acquiring knowledge, deviating from humility and prayer, dispersing themselves and dissipating themselves within and without. Where they have preached, and find that some persons have been edified and moved, they raise themselves up, and become proud of the success, without reflecting that God has granted that success to the prayers and tears of some poor, humble and simple brethren, who do not themselves know this result, for God chooses that they should remain ignorant of it, in order that they may have no temptation to be proud. These are my true brethren, whom I call Knights of the Round Table, who hide themselves in solitary places, to have better opportunities of devoting themselves to prayer, and whose sanctity, well known to God, is sometimes unknown to men, or even to their brethren. One day they will be presented by angels to the Lord, who will say to them: 'My beloved children, here are the souls that have been saved by your prayers, by your tears, by your good example. Receive now the fruit of the labours of those who only made use of their learning for this object. Because you have been faithful over

a few things, I will set you over many.'(258) They will thus enter into the joy of the Lord, loaded with the fruit of their virtues, while the others, who have employed themselves in studying the way of salvation, in order to teach it, without following it themselves, will appear naked and empty handed at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, having on them marks of grief and confusion.

"Then will be known, exalted, and glorified the true merit of holy humility, simplicity, prayer, and poverty, in which consist our vocation. It is now controverted by the actions and discourses of those men who are puffed up with the wind of learning, who treat truth itself as falsehood, and blindly persecute those who walk in the ways of truth; but their erroneous notions which they endeavour to pass off as truths, and by which they blind many, will, in that time, tend only to their shame and affliction; they, with their gloomy ideas, will be cast into exterior darkness, there to associate with the spirits of darkness."(259)

All that St. Francis says, against vain learning a learning which is ostentatious and void of devotion, is founded on the beautiful words of our Saviour: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me you that work iniquity;"(260) and on these of St. Paul: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a

(258) Math. xxv. 29. (259) Math. viii. 12.

(260) Math. vii. 22 et 23.

tinkling cymbal.(261) I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast away."(262)

But it may not be concluded from this, that the holy patriarch had any wish to prevent his brethren from studying and becoming learned; for, 1st, he was not unaware of what St. Augustine teaches on that head.(263) That learning is good in itself, that it is a gift of God, that it is most useful when charity employs it, that it serves as a guide to piety, and that when it has the Holy Scripture for its object, it powerfully excites to the love of God. How many learned men there are in whom humility, simplicity, and all the other virtues are combined with deep reading! 2ndly, he positively delared, as has been reported upon the evidence of St. Bonaventura, that he was well pleased that his brethren should study; it was his wish that schools should be opened in his order, and he himself as has been already noticed, instituted St. Anthony of Padua, lecturer in Theology. 3rdly, He wished to have his brethren apostolical men, employed in the holy ministry for the salvation of souls, and he had inserted in his Rule a chapter which solely relates to the instruction of preachers; he desired in consequence that the Friars Minors should acquire the learning requisite for fulfilling their functions, which in the ordinary course of things

(261) 1 Cor. xiii. 1. (262) Ib. ix. 27.

(263) S. August. de Grat. Christ. cap. xxvi. de Doct. Christ. lib. 2. cap. vii. Epist. 55. ad Januar, alias 119. cap. xxi. n. 37.

is impossible without study.(264) "It was certainly his intention," adds St. Bonaventura,(265) "that his brethren should apply themselves to the study of the Holy Scriptures, for one day having but one copy of the New Testament, he divided it into leaves which he distributed among them, that all might read and instruct themselves at the same time." The holy doctor(266) maintains in another place, that there are no religious, who, by their position, are more employed in preaching than the Friars Minors; and he adds, that as St. Francis required them to be correct and accurate in their discourses, it is clear that he himself obliges them to study since without such application, it is impossible to be correct.

If the blessed Founder has spoken more of humility and piety than of learning and study, it is in the first place, because he well knew that naturally persons are more prone to learn than to practise; and secondly, because the virtues

(264) This is what Mabillon has established on the clearest grounds in his Réflexions sur la Reponse faite à son Traité des études Monastiques, by the Abbé de la Trappe, who pretended that Saint Francis had forbidden his Religious to study; although he says in the same work, pages 135 and 136,—"I don't mean to speak of those Religious, whom the Church is accustomed to employ in her ecclesiastical functions." The learned Benedictine shows that the Friars Minors must study to render themselves capable by their learning of duly performing the sacred functions of the ministry; that Saint Francis approved of their studying provided they attended to their studies with piety, and the facts brought forward by the Abbé do not prove the contrary. We have not alluded here to the celebrated dispute of these two eminent men on the subject of monastic studies except to say that it ended like those lawsuits in which each party gains and looses something. Réflexions sur la Réponse, p. 62, et seq.

(265) St. Bonaventura Opuscul. de trib. quæst. ad Magist.

(266) Id. Expos. in cap. 9. Regul. Fr. Min.

which purify the heart are gifts more precious and necessary than learning, which only enlightens the mind; and in the third place, because he knew that St. Paul says, "that knowledge puffeth up,"(267) that a learned person easily becomes proud and presumptuous, if charity does not keep him in humility and in mistrust of himself.

Finally, let not his words be misconstrued to give colour, under pretence of piety to laziness and ignorance. He preferred, to vain and sterile learning, the humility and simplicity of the poor brethren, who spent their time in prayer; this was no more than right. "A rustical holiness," St. Jerome remarks,(268) "is more valuable than vicious learning and criminal eloquence." But the blessed patriarch only spoke of the lay-brethren, who were not intended for the sacred ministries, or of those clerks whose talents were not equal to being employed in them, and whose occupations were limited to prayer and labour. In respect to the others, who by study might render themselves capable of serving their neighbour spiritually, he certainly would have censured them had they continued in ignorance, even under the pretext of prayer, and manual labour, he, who had adopted, as we have seen, the maxim, That nothing is preferable to the salvation of souls. He well knew that all the brethren did not resemble some among them whom God had supernaturally enlightened, and who, without any other aid than that of prayer, had

(267) 1 Cor. viii. 1.

(268) S. Hier. Epist. ad Nepot. 34 alias 2.

sufficient light to be able to announce the Word of God. St. Jerome says,(269) that if a man of talent must not persuade himself that holiness consists in the beauty of his composition, and in the ornament of eloquence, so also a simple and unpolished man must not imagine that his ignorance constitutes him a saint. This is even still clearer when this man must not be ignorant; now it is maintained that a Friar Minor, clerk or priest, is obliged in conscience, according to the talent he has received from Heaven, to study carefully in order to be competent to fulfil properly the ministries of preaching and the confessional; because the spirit of his vocation, and of his order, is to labour for the salvation of souls. But he must always have before his eyes what his Blessed Father wrote to St. Anthony of Padua: "I agree that you should teach the brethren sacred theology; in such manner, however, that the spirit of holy prayer be not extinguished either in yourself or in others, according to the rule, of which we have made profession."

We have before observed, that when St. Francis was at Sienna, in his last illness, he fell into an alarming state of weakness, so that it was feared he was about to breathe his last, but, that when that had passed over, he dictated a letter to his whole order; this is the tenor of it:—

"To the Reverend and very amiable Brethren, the Minister General, and other Brethren of the

(269) Id. supra.

Order of Minors, Brother Francis send greeting, in Jesus Christ.

"Since it is true, that he who comes from God, hears the word of God; (270) we must, consequently, my well beloved brethren, we who are destined to render to the Lord a purely spiritual worship, not only hear and practise what he says, but also in order to give a sublime idea of the majesty of the Creator, by a profound submission to Him, to give particular attention to all that is contained in any of His words. It is for this that I call upon my brethren, and I exhort them in Jesus Christ to attend to His divine words with all the respect in their power, wheresoever they may find them written, and if they were not in a decent place, or if on the ground, to pick them up, and put them, as much as it may be in their power, in convenient places; it is in order to pay due reverence in these words to the Lord, from whom they emanate; for there are many things which are sanctified by the word of God, and it is by virtue of the words of Jesus Christ, that the sacrament of the altar is completed. (271)

"I add to this admonition, the confession of all my sins, which I make to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to the Blessed Mary, (272) ever a Virgin, and to all the saints in heaven

(270) Joan. viii. 47. (271) 1 Tim. iv. 5.

(272) What could be the intention of the author of a new form of Breviary, which is printed in a foreign country, at least if we may give credit to its title page, and circulated clandestinely in Paris? He has omitted in the first part of the Confiteor the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints. He will doubtless answer that it was to return

and on earth; to the minister general of the order, as to my true master; to all the priests of our order, and to all my other brethren blessed by God. I have committed many faults, of which I acknowledge myself very guilty, inasmuch as I have not kept the rule, according to the promise which I have made to God; inasmuch as by my negligence, or pretext of my infirmities, or because of my ignorance and want of talent, I have not said the divine office as the rule prescribes.

"I entreat, in every possible way, the minister general, my master, to take care that all keep strictly to the rule, that the clerks celebrate the divine office with devotion, as being in the presence of God, in order to please Him by the uprightness of their hearts. Do not let them effect to utter sounds which are pleasing to the ear by the softness of their voices, but let them take care

to ancient precedent. But, had not the Church the power, when it deemed it expedient, to make additions to the formula of public confession; and has any individual a right to leave out what it thought proper to add? Moreover, our present formula is not one of recent date. Cardinal Bona says that he had seen similar ones in very ancient manuscript missals, and in many which are anterior to the thirteenth century; it is found in its present state in a missal printed by order of Pius V. The confession made by St. Francis is an additional proof on this head. It is strange enough, that in these days people consider themselves wiser than the Church; that they have the rashness to censure her discipline, set aside her usages, change her rites, and even say mass differently from what she prescribes; this is the unfortunate consequence of that spirit of error which caused the alteration of her dogmas and the rejection of her decisions. If it is wished to know who it is who has made this alteration in the Confiteor, it is only necessary to apply to the Bishop of Evreux, who, by the depth of his learning, and his zeal for the faith, does honour to the Holy See. "Bona de Rebus Liturg. lib. ii. cap. 2. n. 5 et 7." See also the 4th Tome of D'Achery's Spicilegium, in which he notices the usages of the monastery of Cluni, according to which the public Confession was made to God, and to all the saints. Lib. ii. cap. 30.

that the voice shall be in unison with the spirit, and the spirit with God. It is what I promise(273 to put strictly into practice by His grace, and I shall recommend it strongly to my brethren who are with me, as well as the observance of the other rules. Those who will not adhere to this, I shall not consider as Catholics, nor as brethren; and until such times as they shall have done penance, I will neither see nor speak to them. I say the same thing of those who take useless journeys, to the contempt of regular discipline. They ought to remain in obedience to their superiors, since our Saviour suffered death not to fail in obedience to His most Holy Father.

"I, Brother Francis, a vile and unworthy creature of God, declare, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the minister general of our order, and all his successors, the provincials and the guardians, present and to come, must be in possession of this writing, keep it carefully, and observe and cause to be observed what it contains. According to the good pleasure of Almighty God, all you who shall faithfully put these things in practice, be ye blessed now and ever, as long as the world shall last, and may the Lord be with you eternally. Amen."

1. It must be remarked in this letter, that the holy man often and strongly insists on the attention requisite, not to let any papers be scattered on which the name of God occurs, or any holy

(273) He expressed himself thus on his death-bed, because he was sincerely resolved to recite the Divine Office, as he directed his brethren to recite it had he lived several years longer.

words, but to have them collected and placed with care in appropriate places. This sentiment arose from a lively idea of the greatness of the Sovereign Being, and of the homage which vile creatures are bound to render Him.(274) If we reflect that holy and terrible is the name of God, that the Supreme Majesty has condescended to speak to us, and that we have His own words in writing, could we see such a name, and such words in indecent places, and leave them there? Is it not scandalous that the Holy Scriptures and works of piety are bought and sold for profane uses? They ought to be properly taken care of, or burnt.

2. The humility evinced by the holy patriarch in confessing his sins, in writing to his Vicar, and the whole order, in terms of the greatest contempt of himself, exemplifies the truth of this saying of Wisdom, "That the just man is the first to accuse himself"(275). St. Ephrem, St. Augustin, Pope St. Gregory,(276) and many others, accused themselves publicly of the faults they had fallen into, or that they thought they had committed in the service of God, and which great tenderness of conscience magnified in their eyes. This is a great subject of confusion to those who cannot bring themselves to admit that they have been in the wrong, even when their fault is palpable and apparent; whom we hear bitterly complaining of being obliged by their religion to

(274) Psalm cx. 9. (275) Prov. xiii, 17.

(276) St. Ephr. repreh. sui tom. i. pag. 6 et alibi. edit. Antwerp. 1669. St. Aug. Confess. lib. x. cap. 30 et seq. St. Greg. Mor. in Job, Cap. ult.

accuse themselves of their sins in the tribunal of penance, and who only accuse themselves while excusing what they have done. "Confession," says Tertullian, "is instituted to humble and pull down the pride of man,(277) because there is only a contrite and humble heart that can appease the wrath of God. The priest and the people confess alternately their sins before the introit of the mass, and pray for each other, in order to celebrate and hear it more worthily, being thus prepared by humiliation and contrition. It is likewise a method of expiating ordinary offences, which is adopted by all the religious orders, who publicly accuse themselves of the faults they have committed.

3. What Francis notices in his letter on the subject of the Divine office, is a complete proof that, as early as those times punishment was in use, and this is confirmed by a regulation made in the general chapter of 1249, against those who changed the usual chant, used and approved by preceding chapters-general. But the blessed founder desired that they should not sing in a soft and effeminate style. St. Bernard, (278) sending to the religious of Montiers-Ramey, the office he had composed for the feast of St. Victor, required a similar condition. "If they sing," he said, "let the chant be full and grave, without softness and without harshness; let it be melodious and fluent, without being light and precipitate; let it be pleasing to the ear, so that it

(277) Tertull. de Pœnit. cap. 9 et 10. Psalm l. et xi.
(278) St. Bernard. Epist. 398. n. 2.

may reach the heart, drive away sorrow, and calm the passions; and that, instead of weakening the sense of the words, it may give them additional strength. For, to be deprived by the music of the fruit which is derived from attention to what is sung, and to apply oneself to modulations of the voice rather than to give force to the things to which the voice gives utterance, is no small loss of spiritual benefit. This is a just idea of plain chant, and altogether of church music, which must be very different from that of profane assemblies, not wholly to give pleasure to the ear, when the principal object is to excite devotional feelings in the soul. St. Austin (279) was so nice on this point, that when he heard a psalm sung by a beautiful voice, he was fearful of being more moved by the sound, than by what was sung. However, the Friars are not confined to plain chant by their rule, although it is prescribed to them to perform the office according to the usage of the Roman Church, because the one is not bound by the other. Those who use it, do well; and those who do not sing it, do also well; both the one and the other have good reasons for their respective practices. Each one must conform to the usage of the place where he is, and bear in mind these words of the common father: "Let the voice be in unison with the mind, and the mind with God."

4. As to what the holy patriarch declares, that he will not hold for Catholics, or for brethren, those who will not recite the divine office as he

(279) St. Aug. Confess. lib. x cap. 33.

prescribes, and who will not conform to the other regulations, it must be understood, as in his will given above, which he says, was only made in order that the rule should be better kept in a Catholic manner. He means to say, as the faithful do not consider those as Catholics and brethren who break in matters of faith that unity of spirit which animates all the members of the Church, so he does not hold as Catholics, nor as brethren, in the regular observances, those who lose that spirit of uniformity which all the members ought to have of which a religious order is composed. We might, nevertheless say, that he took the word Catholic, in the sense which concerns faith, because he feared that those who would not recite the divine office in the spirit of the Church, who would refuse to submit to the regulations of an order, approved of by the Church, and which they have entered, must have in their hearts some sentiments hostile to the purity of the faith, or were disposed to adopt such. At least, experience teaches us, and it is seen at this day, that those who censure the discipline and usages of the Church, are the authors or the supporters of the doctrines she condemns.

The other instructions of St. Francis, which are neither less solid nor less affecting, are found in his works, which have been collected and given to the public. No one must feel surprised that he was able to give instruction on so many different subjects. Although he had studied little when in the world, says St. Benaventura, he had subsequently acquired much information, not only

by means of prayer, but by reading. He appropriated some time for reading the holy Scriptures, besides which he was very talented, had great judgment, and was very quick; his memory was so good, that what he had once learnt he never forgot; and the more so as he continually impressed it on his heart, by tender and affectionate devotion. The divine truths which he expressed in his conduct, by a faithful imitation of the virtues of Jesus Christ, and the constant application he gave to prayer, had rendered his mind so pure, and so free from any darkness—had attracted to it such brilliant rays of eternal light, that he penetrated the profoundest mysteries with surprising judgment. The Holy Ghost, Whom in his heart he cherished, instructed him by a plenitude of unction; (280) the love of God carried him into those sanctuaries, into which other masters cannot penetrate, but remain at the door. It is thus the holy doctor speaks of him.

While the holy patriarch was ill at Sienna, a religious of the order of the Friars Preachers, who was a doctor of theology, and truly learned man, put several very difficult questions to him; he answered them so learnedly, and so clearly, that the doctor was quite surprised, and spoke of the circumstance with admiration. Truly, said he, the theology of this holy Father, is an eagle which soars to a great height; it is raised up, as if with wings, by the purity of the heart, and by contemplation, while our knowledge is as that of animals which crawl on the ground.

(280) Joan. ii. 17.

Thus, according to St. Athanasius, the great Anthony, (281) who was illiterate, showed admirable knowledge in his controversy with the heretical Arians, and in his replies to pagan philosophers, who strove to puzzle him. So also, according to the testimony of Sulpicius Severus, (282) no one explained the Holy Scriptures more clearly than the celebrated Bishop of Tours, St. Martin, who had never studied.

Another Friar Preacher asked St. Francis how he was to understand these words of the Saviour to the Prophet Ezekiel: "If thou speakest not to the impious that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand." (283) The humble Father, having at first excused himself, saying, that he should apply to learned theologians to learn the sense of the Holy Scriptures; but, as the religious urged him, nevertheless, to give his opinion, and expressed a great wish to have it preferably to that of others whom he had consulted, he gave him this answer: "I believe these words, if taken in the full extent, to mean, that the servant of God must be by holiness, and the good odour of his life, a torch which burns and enlightens, in order that the splendour of his example may be as a voice which censures the impious; for this is the way to warn and reprehend them all; if he act otherwise, and

(281) Vit. S. Anton. n. 69 et 72. apud S. Athan.

(282) Sulp. Sev. vit. S. Mart. no. 29.

(283) Ezech. iii. 18.

scandalise his neighbour, he will not escape the punishment of heaven."

St. Francis was not ignorant that the literal and immediate sense of this passage is, that pastors, and all those who are in authority, are obliged to instruct, warn, censure, and correct those who are committed to their charge; and they become guilty of the loss of souls, if they are silent when they ought to speak. He himself, faithful in the mission he had received from God and the Holy See, never ceased from exhorting his brethren to sanctify themselves, and from urging sinners to be converted; but he found in the above passage a more extended sense, and one of greater moral influence, which was, to preach by examples; and he adhered to this for many reasons. 1. Because words produce small effect when it is not backed by example. 2. Because there are a greater number of superiors who instruct and censure, than of those who edify by example. 3. Because the number of persons who have no right to instruct and reprove, is the greater, and it is good that they should know, that God will call them to account for the good example which it was their duty to have given, which might have contributed to the conversion of sinners. All this shows how solid and proper the Saint's reply was.

We have also reason to believe that he was instructed in the canon law, since we have seen that he quoted some of its decrees, and that he consulted a talented barrister for the affairs of his order. As to the subjects of morality which he

has treated of, as we find similar thoughts and expressions in them to those of the fathers of the Church, it must necessarily be admitted that he had read some of their works, or that God had given him similar lights. On the mysteries of religion he always spoke with correctness and theological precision, and we may have remarked that he employed against the heretics the strongest proof we have for invincibly establishing the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

His style his plain, because he formed it on the Gospel, from which he would not in any degree deviate, besides that, his was not the age of elegant Latinity ; but in all that he has written we do not find anything that is not clear and intelligible, there are even passages insinuating and persuasive ; we have also reason to admire some parts which are beautiful from their simplicity. Let the cleverest men read his description of the rich sinner on his death-bed, and he will be obliged to admit that it would be impossible to draw a more natural, or more striking portrait.

He had so completely the talent of persuasion, that neither popes, cardinals, nobles, nor any other persons could resist his appeals ; whatsoever he wished, they complied with. It is not easy for the sake of piety, to persuade to that which is contrary to the interests of a family, nevertheless, St. Francis succeeded in this. The following is an example, which, relating only to a very common subject, we, notwithstanding, select, because it contains wholesome instruction.

The Saint was one day sweeping out a country church, according to his usual practice, when a man, whose name was John, and who was ploughing in an adjoining field, came and took the broom from his hands, and after having swept the whole church, he said to him, "Brother, what I have heard of you and of your brethren, has inspired me with an idea of serving God as you do. I did not know how to come to you, but since it has pleased God that I should find you here as I had wished, I offer myself to you, do with me as you please." Francis, knowing by an interior light, that this man had been sent him by the Lord, resolved to receive him into his order, and after having instructed him in the rule, he said to him, "If you resolve upon joining this institute, you must renounce all you have, and give it to the poor." John went immediately to his plough, unyoked the oxen, and brought one to Francis, saying, "I have been long in the service of my father, and I maintain the family by my labour; I think I may take this ox for my reward, and do with it as you shall direct me." He immediately went home to take leave of his parents, and desire them to take care of the plough.

The parents, alarmed when they learnt his intention, ran in despair to the church, where Francis still was, and conjured him not to take a man from them who was so useful to them, and earned their means of living. He replied mildly to them, and told them that he should come and dine with them, and sleep at their house, and would endeavour to console them. He went, and

after dinner, addressing himself to John's father, he said, "My dear host, your son wishes to serve God, and it is God who has inspired him with this thought. This ought not to give you any displeasure, on the contrary, it ought to be gratifying to you, and you should give God thanks, that He has been pleased to select one of your family for His service; this will be no small gain to you; for, for this son whom you give up, you will gain as many children and brethren as there are religious in the order he is about to join. Moreover, your son is one of God's creatures, and if God has destined him for Himself, who shall dare to resist His will? Who shall say to Him, 'Why dost Thou do thus?' (284) He is all powerful, and He is also just. He only asks for what belongs to Him. May His will therefore be done, and may His mercy be extended to your son, whom I cannot and ought not to refuse to receive into the house of God, which he so anxiously wishes me to do. All that I can, and will do for you, is, to desire him to leave you the ox he had destined for the poor, according to the Gospel, and that, abandoning to the world what belongs to the world, he come stripped of everything to throw himself into the arms of Jesus Christ."

This reasoning was so convincing to the parents, that they assented willingly and cheerfully to their son's leaving them, whom before they thought they could not part with. Human prudence will not fail to say that he ought to have remained with his parents, to provide for their subsistence by his

(284) Esther, xiii. 9. Job. ix. 12.

labour; but will it say that James and John,(285) being called by Jesus Christ, ought not to have left Zebedee, their father, who was poor, and whom they maintained by their fishing? Our Lord, in calling them, desired that they should obey His voice, and leave to Providence to provide for the subsistence of their father. St. Francis well knew, that under any other circumstances, this labourer would have been bound to work to provide for his parents; but as he knew that his call was from God to a religious state of life, he wisely judged that the Lord would assist the family by some other means, and that the vocation ought to be followed. The reasons he gave were opposed to the tender (286) affection of those parents who prevent their children from consecrating themselves to God, and although he laid them before them in a simple and unartificial manner, they were not the less calculated to make due impression on the most enlightened persons, as well as on the ignorant peasants who bowed to them.

(285) Math. iv. 21 et 22.

(286) St. Jerome says that it is a sort of piety in a child to be cruel to parents who endeavour to prevent him from sacrificing himself to God, but that it is only in such circumstances that it is permitted to him to be so. Epist. 5 alias 1, ad Heliod. St. Augustin teaches us, that a child whose parents wish to retain in the world, when God commands him to leave it, must deaden in his heart by the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, that carnal affection, in order to give life to sentiments of Christianity. Epist. ad Læt. 243 alias 38. n. 5. St. Bernard addressed these words to a young man who refused to consecrate himself to God out of tender affection for his mother; "If you have great affection for your mother, leave her for your own sake and for hers, otherwise she will perish by causing your loss." There is impiety in despising one's mother; but in despising her for Jesus Christ, there is great piety. He who has said: "Honour thy father and thy mother," has also said, "that he who loves his father or his mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. Epist. 104. n. 5.

In his sermons he took no pains to polish his language, and cared as little as the apostle did who was reproached for not making studied discourses; (287) but we are not, therefore, to conclude from this, that he preached without eloquence. A man who has considerable genius, judgment, and quickness, gifted with an excellent memory; a strong, sonorous, and agreeable voice, penetrated with the great truths of religion, and with the most tender sentiments of piety, who speaks with ease, naturally and persuasively, with all the vehemence and all the fire, the effect of ardent charity, employing everything that can move and instruct his auditors; is not such a man eloquent? Well, such an one was St. Francis.

Many people form to themselves a false idea of eloquence; they make it consist in a happy choice of words, the brilliancy of thought, the harmony of the number and measure of the periods. But all this is the smallest part; it is only that which pleases in order to attract attention, and it must be used with precaution, particularly in evangelical discourses. "The principal object," says St. Augustin, (288) "is to instruct well, that those who listen may understand every word that is said to them, and to excite such feelings in them as may lead them to adopt the view which is laid before them." These are the dispositions to be created, which the holy doctor calls the triumph of eloquence. (289) He admires them in the

(287) 1 Cor. ii. 1 et 4; 2 Cor. xi. 6.

(288) S. Aug. de Doctr. Christ. lib. 4 cap. 12, 13, et 14.

(289) Ibid. cap. 6 et 7.

prophets and apostles; he thinks that by them the sacred writers, joined naturally to their innate sagacity the most beautiful ornaments of the art, without seeking them, and he adduces various examples. "Since," he adds, "that as it is true that the rules of the oratorical art are drawn from the mind, are we to be surprised that God, who forms those minds, shall imprint on some without study, the same rules, and that from time to time He sends forth such chosen men to announce His word. It is, indeed, with this description of eloquence that the word of God should be announced; that by speaking great truths, propounding them clearly, endeavouring to introduce them into the hearts; and not making use of the force of language, or other beauties of rhetoric, but inasmuch as it is necessary for instructing and enforcing them.

The polish of language which St. Francis neglected, was wonderfully compensated by divine virtue. St. Bonaventura says, that the Holy Ghost, from whom he had received his unction, and his mission, inspired him with abundance of words to preach His holy doctrine, and continually assisted him; and that Jesus Christ, who is the strength of the Father, came invariably to his aid; that, indeed, he had recourse to the ornaments of human eloquence in his discourses, but that inspiration was very perceptible; that his preaching was a great fire which penetrated quite to the bottom of hearts, with so much efficacy, that the most obdurate were softened and had recourse to penance. Men and women, young and old, nobles

and plebeians, flocked in crowds to see and hear this extraordinary man whom God had sent them. He seemed to them, in fact, to be a man from the other world, when they saw him, with his eyes elevated to heaven, with the view of drawing them thither; and, as soon as he spoke, they felt their hearts moved to compunction. All that he said against the public scandals, was received with respect; those whose crimes he censured, whatever confusion they might feel from it, did not dare complain, not even those in the highest station. Some of the learned were likewise noticed amongst his auditory, and they, more than any others, admired the powerful influence of his discourses, knowing him to be a man who had not gone through any course of study. In short, the public was so charmed by hearing him, that after preaching one day at Cortona, and wishing to return to the convent of Celles, the guards at the gates of the town would not let him pass. After having preached for three successive days there he only got leave to go, after the strongest entreaties, and after having promised to leave Brother Guy there, whose sanctity he assured them would free Cortona from many evils. God punished, in a most frightful manner, an insolent young girl, who was making a noise with a sort of drum, during the Saint's sermon; he had called upon her three times to be quiet, but she laughed at him, and he was then inspired to say in a loud voice, "Devil, take what is thy own." At the same moment the girl was raised up into the air, and she was seen no more. By this dreadful example, God proposed

to teach them the respect they were bound to have for the instructions which His servants teach them ; as once He taught the faithful not to lie to the Holy Ghost, by the deaths of Ananias and Saphira, (290) which followed the reproach which St. Peter had made them. (291)

The supernatural and miraculous gifts which St. Francis had received from God gave great weight to his preaching. A man who casts out devils, who raises the dead to life, who cures the sick, whose prophecies are verified, who discovers spirits, who commands animals, and makes them obey him ; a man who performs these prodigies and many others, is listened to as if he were an angel, when he speaks. We may have noticed in the Life of the Saint, how authoritatively he drove out devils from the bodies of those who were possessed. We have seen the dead brought to life, under extraordinary circumstances, and a great number of sick cured.

The Holy Ghost had bestowed on him the grace of cures, to such a degree, that it not only gave its virtue to his hands, and to the sign of the cross, which he usually made, but to everything which he had touched. "The cord with which he girded himself," says St. Bonaventura, "fell into the hands of a man, who went from house to house where there were any sick, soaked it in water, and

(290) Acts v. 5 et 10.

(291) St. Jerome says that it was not St. Peter who put them to death, nor who called for their death; that by a spirit of prophecy he only declared the judgment of God upon these two persons. So also it was not St. Francis who delivered the girl, who was so insolent, to the devil, it was God Himself, by the mouth of His servant. Epist. ad Demetr.

made them drink it, which effected their cure. The legend which was composed by order of Pope Gregory IX., immediately after the death of St. Francis, states, that infirm persons were placed before him in the public squares, in order to their being restored to health by him, and he was requested to bless bread, in order that it might be a cure for sicknesses which might survene.

The holy doctor assures us, that the gift of prophecy appeared in our Saint with great splendour, that not only did he foretell things to come, but also spoke of those things which were happening in his absence, as if they were present before his eyes; that he penetrated to the bottom of hearts, and saw the most secret recesses of consciences, so that it might have been said, that he inspected the mirror of eternal light, and that its admirable splendour discovered to him what was most hidden. We shall only add here to what has been related on this head, some anecdotes which may be useful.

God revealed to him in prayer, the loss of one of the religious who had the reputation of being a saint, but who was so peculiar in everything, that, in order the more rigidly to keep silence, he usually confessed by signs. The blessed Father having come to the convent in which this religious was, he saw him, and spoke of him to the others, who were loud in their praises of him. "Brethren," said he, "cease all these praises, and give them not to inventions of the devil; know that all this is but a temptation, and an extraordinary illusion." The brethren could not persuade them-

selves that so many marks of perfection were but covers to imposture; but a few days after, this pretended saint left the order, which proved that St. Francis had probed to the bottom of his soul.

He knew in the same manner, why another, who seemed to be adorned with every virtue, had thrown off the habit of the order, and he replied to his brethren who expressed their surprise at it: "Do not be astonished, my brethren; this wretch is lost because he was not grounded in humility, and in the fear of God. Believe me, that without this foundation, it is fruitless to endeavour to become virtuous."

Of two religious who were returning from the Terra di Lavoro, he saw in spirit that the senior did not by any means edify his companion. On their arrival he asked the younger what had occurred on the road, the other replied, that all had gone on well. "Take care," answered Francis, "take care, and don't say what is false on pretence of humility. I know, I know; but wait a little, and you will see." In fact, the giver of scandal abandoned his vocation shortly after.

The charitable father received with great kindness one of the brethren who had apostatised from the order, and now returned; he even gave him the kiss of peace. But, pointing out to him the gallows which was on a height at some distance, he said, "If the devil induces you to leave the order a second time, he will lead you to be hanged on the gallows which you see from hence." This weak penitent did not profit from this warning,

but left the order again, and led a libertine life, was taken up for a robbery, and hanged on the spot pointed out. St. Francis might have said of those, as St. John did of the apostates who left the Church. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have remained with us;" (292) that is to say, that they were not firm in the Christian religion.

If religious who renounce their profession, are not always punished in this world, by coming to a tragical end, what judgment must they not expect from God, who cannot endure, that, putting the hand to the plough, they shall only cast a look behind? (293) but what punishment must not those solitaries have to dread in the next world, who have revolted against the authority of the Church, and against the superiors of their holy orders, for the support of errors which had been condemned, who had made the faithful weep at the sorrowful scene of their scandalous apostacy in 1725? In the opinion of St. Bernard, (294) it is likewise an apostacy to abandon the austerity of his rule, to adopt one which is milder, without cause, or for an insufficient cause, after having obtained a dispensation upon representations unfaithfully made. He notices also another, which he denominates an apostacy of the heart, which comprises a wish to return into Egypt, as the

(292) Joan ii. 19.

(293) Luke ix. 62.

(294) S. Bernard. epist. 313. n. 5. Apol. ad Guillel. Abb. cap. 13. n. et in Psalm. Qui habitat. Serm. 3. n. 5.

people of Israel did; so, that under a religious habit, the mind is wholly secular, and it is sought to obtain for themselves the vain consolation of the world.

Among many persons, who appeared to be firm in a virtuous life, St. Francis, according to St. Bonaventura, predicted with certainty, such as would fall, and among the wicked, those who would be converted. It is one of the most singular inspirations which God gives to His servants; for persons only fall by their own free will, and they are only converted by a free co-operation with grace. God knows infallibly, without any interference with our perfect liberty, in what way the human will will make its choice on these two points; but how can that be explained? This is the difficulty of theologians, and in which they have to avoid precipices.

The knowledge of the human heart belongs to God alone; even the angels have it not, unless imparted to them by His light,(295) and He was pleased to communicate that light to Francis. We have had several instances of this, but we must add the following. The blessed Father being at the hermitage of Grecio, two of his brethren came from a great distance off, urged by a strong desire to see him and to receive his blessing, which they had long been desirous of. Unfortunately, they reached the hermitage, when he was retired to his cell, from which he did not come out to receive visits, and they could not see him. As they were

(295) 2 Paral. vii. 30. Jerem. xvii. 10. S. Chrys. homil. 4 in Matth. cap. 1. ver. 20.

going away greatly disappointed, he came out, contrary to his usual custom, called them, and blessed them in the name of Jesus Christ, and made the sign of the cross upon their foreheads as they had wished. Humanly speaking, he could not have known that they were come, but he knew it in spirit as well as if he had seen them.

Having restored peace, and performed some splendid miracles in a town, he left the place early in the morning, without having taken leave of the bishop, who had given him a most honourable reception. At a spot where three roads diverged, he did not know which one he ought to take, and he desired Brother Massé, who was his companion, to turn round and round, no doubt to put his obedience to the test (296). When he began to be giddy, he ordered him to stop, and to follow the road which was before him. Massé went first, and said to himself, "How uncivil! how simple! he not only has not taken leave of the bishop who received him with so much kindness, but he makes me turn round and round as a child." This interior murmuring did not last; these reflections followed: "How could I have so much pride as to despise a man who is so evidently beloved by God? Fool that I am, I deserve to go to hell for daring to censure the actions of Francis, through whom the Lord works such wonders, and whom I ought

(296) In this he imitated the holy Fathers of the desert, who, as Cassian relates, sometimes ordered their disciples childish and seemingly unreasonable things, to teach them the holy folly of the cross, by calling on them to renounce their own will, their own opinions, and the wisdom of the world; and God sanctioned this, by many miracles. Cassian. de Instr. renunt. cap. x. 24 et seq.

to look upon as an angel. And, after all, what reason has he given me for censuring him? He left the town without having taken leave of the bishop, but it was to avoid fresh honours being shown him; he made me turn round and round, but he made me take the right road." Then Francis exclaimed: "Ah, Brother Massé, how different are these feelings from those first entertained! From whence do these come, and from whence did those others arise?" Massé, seeing that his thoughts were discovered, threw himself at the Saint's feet, and solicited his pardon.

A particular gift which Francis received from God, was the control of animals. He gave them his commands, and they obeyed him; they did whatever he pleased; it was, moreover, noticed that they showed a sort of affection for him, and applauded what he did in their way. Upon which two observations occur. The first is taken from St. Bonaventura, who says that the state of innocence was represented in the power which God gave to His servant over animals. Adam, just and innocent, had absolute control over them, and he exercised it in giving to each of them its proper name, when God made them pass before him, as we read in Genesis.(297) His sin caused him to lose this privilege, with all the others which had been attached to this happy state; and we experience, as he did, the revolt of the animals in punishment of his having disobeyed God. But when an eminent sanctity has brought men more to original justice, and has in some measure re-established

(297) Genes. ii. 19 and 20.

them in a state of innocence, it has sometimes pleased the Almighty to restore them to some of the privileges which man enjoyed in those times, and in particular this control over animals; this is what is seen in well-authenticated acts of many saints, and in what St. Bonaventura relates of St. Francis, on the testimony of ocular witnesses, as well as on the evidence of facts which were of public notoriety.

The second thing which deserves notice is, that when this holy man compelled animals to obey him, and when they appeared to be attached to him, it never occurred but when it was to give authority to the word of God, to do some good to a neighbour, to give a salutary lesson, or to excite to the practice of some virtue, as we shall now see. It is another proof that these marvels had their source in God, who proposes in all He does, some end worthy of His wisdom; from which we must conclude that heretics could not have turned these things into ridicule, but through a malignity, which is both irreligious and foolish.

Francis left Assisi one day, to go to preach, not having any longer a doubt but that he and his brethren were called for the service of souls, after the mission they had received from God and from the Supreme Pontiff, which was confirmed by supernatural lights, as we have seen above. Being near to the town of Bevagna, he saw on a particular spot a number of birds collected, of various species, and he went up to them, and said, "My brethren, listen to the word of God; you have

great reason to praise your Creator, He has covered you with feathers, He has given you wings wherewith to fly, He has placed you in the air where the breathing is so pure, and He provides you with everything which is necessary, without giving you any trouble." While he was thus speaking and saying other similar things, the birds remained where they were, turning towards him, and those which were perched on the branches of trees, bending their heads, as if to listen to what he said. It was a curious thing to observe the joy they appeared to feel and make known by their motions; they stretched their necks, they spread their wings, opened their beaks, and looked anxiously at the zealous preacher, who walked about in the midst of them, and sometimes touched them with his habit, without any of them stirring. They only took to flight after he had given them leave, and made on them the sign of the cross to bless them.

It was God's intention to honour the ministry of the Saint in the eyes of his companions, by this miracle which they witnessed, and the circumstances of which they communicated to St. Bonaventura. It was also to show the attention which ought to be given to the truths of salvation, and this is the reason why Francis, in turning to them said, with admirable candour: "I am very neglectful in not having as yet preached to the birds." He observed, by this apparent simplicity, which was full of good sense, that men often fail to listen to the preachers as the birds had seemingly listened to him; in the same sense in which

St. Martin had said, when complaining of the insensibility of the men of his times: "They do not attend to me, though the serpents obey me." (298) This means, that with the aid of reason and grace, they will not do what unreasonable animals necessarily do by the impulse of Divine power.

But why preach to birds, will the sages of this age ask? but why did David say what the Church repeats daily in her divine office? "Whales and all that move in the waters, bless the Lord. All ye beasts and cattle, fowls of the air, bless the Lord." (299) The three young men who were in the furnace at Babylon, said the same thing. A heart full of love and gratitude would wish that all creatures should have hearts and tongues to glorify the Author of their being; he knows that even the beasts praise Him by the marks they bear of His power, wisdom, and goodness; in seeing them, in speaking to them, he commemorates His sovereign greatness.

On leaving Bevagna, Francis went to preach in the borough of Alviano, and not being able to make himself heard in consequence of the noise the swallows made, who had their nests there, he spoke these words to them: "Swallows, my sisters, you have made yourselves heard long enough; it is now my turn to speak. Listen then to the word of God, and keep silence while I preach." Immediately, as if they had understood what he said, they ceased their noise, and re-

(298) Sulp. Sev. Dial. iii. n. 12.

(299) Psalm xiv. Dan. viii. cap. 3. Psalm civ. Dan. cap. iii.

mained where they were to the end of his sermon. The fruit of this miracle was to revive the fervour and piety of the assembly, who glorified God, and listened to the preacher with wonderful deference. The circumstance was soon spread, and produced everywhere a similar effect.

St. Bonaventura, who gives us this anecdote, adds, that some time afterwards, a scholar at Paris, (300) who was of good conduct, having been interrupted in his studies by the chirping of a swallow, said to his companions, "This is one of those who interrupted the blessed Francis in his sermon, and which he silenced;" having then addressed the swallow, he said, with great faith, "In the name of Francis, the servant of God, I order you to be silent and to come to me." It was instantly silent, and came to him; in his surprise he let it go, and was not again troubled by it. It was thus it pleased God to honour the name of His servant.

Other examples are found in the Saint's Life, of the power he exercised over animals, when by their noise, or by any other means they interrupted his sermons or prayers, as on his return from Syria, near the lagunes of Venice, where he saw a great number of birds which were singing. He went into the midst of them to say his office with his companions, but the noise the birds made prevented their hearing each other; Francis, upon that, ordered them to cease singing till he had finished his office, and, in fact, says the holy

(300) S. Bonaventura, who had the degree of doctor at Paris, and had lived there a considerable time, who wrote while there, and at Mantes, the Life of St. Francis, had every means of verifying this fact.

doctor, the author of his Life, from that moment they ceased their chirping until the office being finished, he gave them leave to resume their song, which they did as before ; he took this opportunity to settle some of his religious there to celebrate the praises of the Lord, as has been before noticed. St. Ambrose (301) speaks of a circumstance as well known to all the world, that some of the faithful having been assembled in a spot where the croaking of the frogs greatly disturbed them, a priest commanded them to be quiet, and to show respect for holy things ; and that they immediately ceased from making any noise, and that these irrational animals respected what they were incapable of understanding.

We have already seen that when Francis was at Grecio, he freed the country from the wolves which had ravaged it. At Gubio, he tamed one in an extraordinary manner. He took it into the public square where he preached ; and having pointed out to his auditors, that God sends sometimes these carnivorous animals to warn sinners to return to their duties, he addressed the wolf, and made an agreement with it, the clauses of which were, that the inhabitants should find it in food, and that the wolf should do no injury to any of them. This was faithfully attended to on both sides. During two years the animal came to the town to feed, and did no injury to any one. The holy man had tamed in a similar manner, at Carinola, a fox that stole all the poultry of a poor old woman, and from which she received no injury

(301) S. Ambr. de Virginib. lib. iii. cap. 3. n. 14.

afterwards. Similar traits are found in the lives of many saints, whose acts are admitted to be authentic and certain, by the most talented critics. St. Athanasius (302) remarks in the Life of St. Anthony, that wild animals causing great damage in a field which he cultivated, he took one gently, and said to all the others, while speaking to the one he had caught, "Why do you injure me, who never did you any harm? go, and in the name of the Lord, never come here any more." The holy doctor adds, that from that time they were never again seen in that place, as if they had been afraid of disobeying him. Sulpicius Severus, (303) relates of St. Martin, that he had an extraordinary control over all animals; that, resting himself one day with his disciples on the bank of a river, he saw a snake swimming over, and he ordered it in the name of the Lord to swim back again, upon which it was seen to return with as much speed as it had come. James, who wrote the Life of St. Columban, (304) given by the learned Father Mabillon, after Surius, states that the crows and the bears obeyed him, and that all the beasts of the field came at his call, in the same manner as those which are domesticated. It was in order to teach men to esteem and imitate a virtue which the Lord caused to be respected even by dumb animals.

The obedience which irrational animals rendered to St. Francis, was frequently a sensible stimulus

(302) Vit. S. Anton. n. 50.

(303) Sulp. Sev. Dial. iii. n. 12.

(304) Vit. S. Colomb. n. 25, 27 et 30 inter Act. SS. Ord. S. Bened.

to the practice of virtue. The language which pagans imputed to them, and from which they drew axioms of morality, had nothing in it but what was fabulous; but truly did God confound the avarice and criminal subserviency of Balaam,(305) by opening the mouth of the ass(306) which spoke to him. We should have no more difficulty in believing that God, by an act of His power, had made some animals perform some instructive actions which were commanded them by one of His most faithful servants, than we have in crediting the above, especially when we have so faithful a reporter of the fact as St. Bonaventura, who had received them from ocular witnesses.

St. Francis, when at Rome in 1222, had always with him a little lamb, to remind him of the Lamb of God, who chose to be sacrificed for us. When he was about to leave the eternal city, he confided the little animal to the care of the Lady of Septisal, the illustrious widow of whom we have often had occasion to speak. The little lamb, as if it had been trained to spiritual exercises by the holy man, followed this lady to church; stayed there, and returned with her, never leaving her. If she was behind her usual time of rising in a morning, it would go to her bed, where, by bleat-

(305) Numb. xxii. 28 et 30; 2 Petr. ii. 16.

(306) S. Augustin. says that God made no change in the nature of this animal, and only made use of it as an instrument to produce the sounds and words which He intended to convey to the wicked prophet. Quæst. in Numb. 48 and 50. This was neither more miraculous nor more difficult to believe than what we read in the same book of Numbers, chapters xxiii. and xxiv. that Balaam blessed the Israelites three times whom he desired to have cursed, and that his tongue was moved by a very different spirit from that which possessed his heart.

ing or striking the bed with its head, or other motions, it seemed to call upon her to rise and offer her grateful prayer to God. The lady was much attached to this lamb, and took care of it, says St. Bonaventura, as a disciple of Francis, which had become her instructor in devotion.

A present was made to the holy Father at St. Mary of the Angels of a sheep; he received it thankfully, because of the innocence and simplicity of which it was a symbol, and he said to it, as if it could understand him, that it was necessary it should assist at the praises of the Lord, without incommoding the brethren; the sheep obeyed with great punctuality. When the religious went to the choir to sing the office, the sheep went of itself to the church, placed itself at the foot of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, bent in its fore-legs, and bleated in a low tone, as if to pay its homage. It did the same at mass when the Host was elevated. St. Bonaventura remarks, that this animal, by the respect it manifested during the celebration of the sacred mysteries, taught the Christians the deep reverence with which they ought to assist at mass, and at the same time passed a deserved censure on those who are irreverent or indevout during its celebration. How many worldly persons are there who assist at mass as if it was a profane assembly, staring about with immodest airs and in unbecoming postures? They chatter and converse as if they were anywhere else, and scarcely do they bend a knee when the sacred body of Jesus Christ is elevated, in order that they may adore it. How criminal! how

scandalous! without adverting further to the outrages of mind and heart which are offered to the Son of God in this august sacrifice. Where is their faith? where is their religion? Did the pagans ever show a want of respect when they sacrificed to their false gods? How shameful is it that the worship of the true God should be so disgraced! What punishments are prepared for such profanations! (307).

The smallest things raised the heart of St. Francis to God, and he made use of them to create similar feelings in the hearts of his disciples. The chirping of a grasshopper which was on a fig-tree near his cell, inspired him with fresh fervour; he called it and it came to him directly, and he made it sing on his hand, which it began anew whenever he required it. At the end of eight days he said to his companions, "Let it now go; it has excited us long enough to praise God," at the very moment the grasshopper flew away, and was seen no more. One day, as he was about to take his collation with Brother Leo, he felt himself interiorly consoled on hearing a nightingale sing. He begged Leo to sing the praises of God alternately with the bird; the latter having excused himself, alleging the badness of his voice, he himself responded to the bird, and continued to do so till night, when he was obliged to give over, acknowleging that the little bird had beaten him. He made it come upon his hand, and praised it for having sung so well, fed it, and it was only after

(307) See Bourdaloue's sermon on the Mass, for the Monday of the fourth week of Lent.

he had desired it to leave him, and given it his blessing, that the nightingale flew away.

In the impression which the power of God affected upon animals, in favour of St. Francis, there was this further circumstance which was marvellous, that they seemed to have an affection for him, and appeared pleased when they saw him. It is St. Bonaventura who gives several examples of this.

The servant of God going to Sienna, passed near a flock of sheep which were feeding in a meadow. He greeted them, as was his custom, with an air of kindness; and immediately the sheep, the rams, and the lambs, left their pasture, came to him, lifted up their heads to greet him in their manner; which was greatly wondered at by the shepherds and by his companions. Hares and rabbits were presented to him which had been caught alive; they were put before him on the ground, and they immediately sprang into his arms. Although he gave them their liberty, they remained with him, and he was obliged to have them removed far off into the country by some of his religious, and put in a place of safety.

On the banks of the lake of Rieti, a fisherman gave him a live water-fowl. After having kept it a little while, he tried to make it fly away, but in vain. He then raised his eyes to heaven, and remained for more than an hour in a state of ecstasy, after which he mildly ordered the bird to go away and praise the Lord, and he gave it his blessing. The bird showed signs of pleasure by its motions, and flew away. On the same lake, a

large fish which had been just caught, was presented to him, he held it for some time in his hand, and then put it back in the water. The fish remained in the same place, playing in the water before him, as if out of regard for him, it could not leave him, and did not disappear till it had received the Saint's leave, together with his blessing. Something similar is found in the Life of St. Columban. (308) One of his disciples affirms, that in his solitude he often called to him birds and wild beasts, and that they came on hearing his voice, that he caressed them with his hand, and that they returned his caresses, as little dogs do those of their masters.

The first time that St. Francis went to Mount Alverno, he was surrounded by a multitude of birds, which lit upon his head, on his shoulders, on his breast, and on his hands, evincing by their beaks and wings, the pleasure his arrival caused them; which he noticed to his companions, as a mark of the will of God that he should remain in this mountain. When he came thither and received the Stigmata there, the birds greeted him in a similar manner; and a hawk, which could only have come thither by a supernatural impulse, attached itself peculiarly to his person. When the hour of the night drew near, at which Francis rose to pray, the bird did not fail to come and make a noise at the door of the cell. This punctuality was very pleasing to the Saint, because it caused him to be watchful; but when his infirmities were more severe than usual, the bird,

(308) Vit. S. Colomb. n. 30 inter Act. SS. Ord. S. Bened. sec. 2.

well taught by Him who controlled his movements, did not come to wake him till sunrise, and even then did not make so much noise as usual. St. Bonaventura considers these marvels which God operated for his servant on Mount Alverno, by means of birds, as a divine foreboding of the great favour he received some few days after, when, being raised by the wings of contemplation, the winged and crucified seraph appeared to him, and imprinted on his body the wounds of Jesus Christ.

The Lord bore witness to his sanctity until the very day of his death, by the affection which animals seemed to have for him. It is once more St. Bonaventura who affords us the proofs of this. When St. Francis was ill at Sienna, a gentleman sent him a live pheasant which had been just caught. As soon as the bird saw the Saint, and heard his voice, it attached itself so intensely to him, that it could not bear to be away from him; it was often taken to the vineyards to induce it to fly away, but it always flew quickly back to the Father. It was put into the hands of a worthy man, who often came to see the sick man, but as long as it was away, it would not feed; but on being brought back and seeing the Father, it showed signs of pleasure, and fed greedily. On the day of the Saint's death, which happened on the 4th of October, a multitude of larks lit upon the roof of the convent, although it was at nightfall, and they dislike the dark; they sang for a long time, and their warbling, which appeared to have something peculiar in it, was an evidence

as pleasing as it was convincing of the glory of the servant of God, who had so often invited them to praise their Creator.

It has been thought for many reasons, that in giving his Life to the public, these extraordinary occurrences should not be suppressed. 1. Because, St. Bonaventura, who was so prudent and eminent a divine, has thought it right to give them a place in his Legend. 2. They are warranted by precedents, in the examples given by St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, Sulpicius Severus, (309) and several other grave authors, whose works have merited the esteem of the learned. 3. Some passages in the Holy Scriptures may be adduced in favour of their credibility. In the Third Book of Kings, God says to the Prophet Elias: "Hide thyself by the torrent of Carith. I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there," (310) and the sacred author adds, "and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the torrent." The prophet Daniel in the lions' den in which he was, replied to King Darius: "My God has sent His angels, and hath shut up the mouths of the lions, and they have not hurt me, for as much as before Him justice hath been found in me." (311) Our Saviour placed among the number of miracles, that those who believed

(309) As above.

(310) 3 Reg. xvii. 3, 4, et 6.

(311) Dan. vi. 22.

(312) would perform many in His name, such as taking up serpents, handling them, and killing them without their doing them any injury. (313) Is it, then, incredible that God, by His power, should have made impressions on various sorts of animals, to render them obedient to the voice of His servants? 4. We have paid little heed to a handful of unbelievers, and some wise worldlings, enemies of anything marvellous where religion is concerned, who exert their talent for raillery more on what is sacred than on what is profane; but, in order to pander to their malevolence, or to avoid their false and dangerous prejudices, it has not been thought reasonable to deprive the faithful of the instruction given them in the obedience and respect given to the Saint even by animals. Venerable Bede (314) teaches us, that our Lord shows us by that the state in which we should have been had we not disobeyed Him; which is a reflection which should cause us to sigh and to submit in a spirit of penance to the punishment, which is the chastisement of sin. St. Bonaventura says, that all creatures were submissive to St. Francis, because he had brought his flesh entirely under subjection to his spirit, and his spirit to God. Now, according to St. Augustin, (315) it is in this twofold submission that the

(312) It does not follow from this that all those who have faith must work miracles. This gift has been promised principally to the Church in general, for certain occasions where it might be necessary for her, and we have seen its fulfilment when the good of religion has required it.

(313) Mark xvi. 18.

(314) Beda in Hex.

(315) In Psalm cxliii. n. 6.

whole order of a Christian life consists; by that wild beasts are spiritually controlled by restraining the passions, since in the opinion of St. Gregory and St. Bernard, (316) to stifle venomous suggestions, is to kill serpents. Finally, the empire of saints over animals, is an anticipated reward for the innocence of their lives, and for their inviolable fidelity in the service of God; and does not this give us some idea of the infinite good which God has prepared for those who love Him? St. Augustin said, in speaking of the great miracles which were performed by the relics of St. Stephen in all countries: "Figure to yourselves, my brethren, what God has prepared for us in the land of the living, in the consideration of what He effects in this world by the ashes of the dead." (317) May we not also say, "If God has given such power to His friends while they were on earth, He now fulfils in their regard what Jesus Christ has promised in His Gospel: "That the master will establish the good and faithful servant over all His goods." (318) Let us, then, faithfully serve a Master who is so magnificent in His rewards; let us imitate the saints in order to share with them, not the gift of working miracles in this world, but in the graces which sanctified them, and in the happiness which they enjoy in heaven.

The Life of St. Francis furnishes many other wonders of this nature, the memory of which is

(316) S. Greg. Homil. 29. in Evang. S. Bern. serm. 1. in 'Asc. Dom. n. 3.

(317) S. August. Serm. 317. n. 1.

(318) Matth. xxiv. 27.

preserved in many parts of Italy, and which are inserted in the Annals of Wading. Here, however, are only two examples of the assistance he obtained from God for the wants of his brethren. At his return from Spain, great numbers of them came to St. Donin in Lombardy, to congratulate him; they joined those of the convent, and went before him. When they had thus escorted him, it happened that at dinner-time they were short of bread, because no one had remained at home to fetch it. The Saint ordered the dispenser to look into the place where the bread was usually kept, and he found there a quantity of new bread, where a moment before there had been none. The religious acknowledged the power which God had given to their Father, and ate of it with great respect as a present from heaven.

The other miracle was common to him and to St. Dominic, and has something very singular in it. It is taken from a Spanish manuscript written by one of the companions of the patriarch of the Friars Preachers; (319) of which this is an abridgment from the original, which is very lengthy.

St. Francis, holding a chapter of his order in a small town, our Father St. Dominic, was near him, as they frequently visited each other for spiritual conversation. There were no provisions in the convent, dinner-time came, and there was nothing to eat. The two saints betook themselves to prayer, and feeling that their prayers had been favourably heard, they assembled the religious in

(319) Cod. MS. fol. 13, 14, et 15.

the refectory, where, after grace had been said, twenty young men of great comliness were seen to enter the room with everything necessary for their repast, who, having waited at table, retired two and two. Dinner being finished, St. Dominic made a beautiful discourse on confidence in God; he was accustomed to preach in the convents of the order of Friars Minors, when he happened to be there. This was owing to his great intimacy with St. Francis, since God had brought them together." This finishes the narrative of the author; what he relates is much to be admired, but David assures us, (320) that the Lord has always His eyes open on them that fear Him, in order to provide for their necessities. He gave a miraculous proof of this to the prophet Elias,(321) causing him to find bread and water in the desert; and to the widow of Sarepta, in multiplying her flour and oil; (322) and in what He manifested in a splendid manner in favour of St. Francis, at the famous chapter of the Mats, where more than five thousand religious were satisfied by the marvellous intervention of Providence, as has been recorded above, by the writings of St. Bonaventura.

An eminent and manifest holiness, accompanied by evident miracles, drew extraordinary honours on the servant of the Almighty. We have seen the consideration in which he was held by popes, cardinals, bishops, kings, princes, nobility, and magistrates. The Sultan of Egypt, even at the

(320) Psalm xxxii. 18, 19.
(321) 3 Reg. xix. 16.
(322) Ibid. xvii. 16.

time the Christians were making war upon him, treated Francis with a distinction full of esteem, and respect. The legend composed by order of Pope Gregory IX., mentions particularly that on his arrival in cities, towns, and villages, the clergy and people, the great and the lowly, men and women, went out to meet him, carrying great boughs, and singing hymns of praise and joy. Some kissed the ground on which he trod, others strove to touch his poor tunic, many cut pieces off it, and it was sometimes necessary to tell him that this had been done. Those who could touch him and kiss his feet, esteemed themselves fortunate."

The heretics paid him their homage by the confusion which his presence caused them; far from having the courage to oppose his mission, they hid themselves, and did not dare to appear where he was. The faithful, delighted, flocked from all parts to see him. His attachment to the Catholic doctrine, and to the See of St. Peter, apparent in the holiness of his life, and the miracles he performed, strengthened them in the belief of orthodox truths; it was a triumph for the faith. In fact, so holy a life can only be found in the true Church, and it is only to her children that God grants the testimony of miracles. The virtue of heretics is counterfeit, for there has never been any true virtue without faith. All the miracles which they pretend have been performed confirmatory of their doctrine, are false; for God is incapable of authorising error. It must also be remarked, that in all the honours shown to the

Blessed Father, who was a poor man, meanly clothed, of no show, solely solicitous to appear contemptible, and became, nevertheless, the object of public veneration, and considered the wonder of his age. The saying of St. Augustin is verified, that a soul eminent for sublime virtue can no more be hid, than a city built on a mountain ; (323) or, as the Wise man says, "Glory shall uphold the humble of spirit, and humility goes before glory." (324)

The personal qualities of St. Francis, attached men to him in a scarcely less degree, than his extraordinary sanctity, and the gift he possessed of working miracles called for their admiration. This is the portrait we find of him in the legend we have before alluded to. "Our Blessed Father was agreeable to all. Joy, serenity, kindness, and modesty were perceptible in his countenance. He was naturally mild and affable, compassionate, liberal, prudent, discreet, gave sound advice, was faithful to his word, and full of courage ; he was easy in his manners, accommodating himself to all sorts of tempers, he was all to all, he was a Saint among the saintly, and among sinners, as if he was one of them ; his conversation was graceful, and his manner insinuating ; close in his reasoning, energetic and compliant in matters of business, and, finally, simple in his actions and words."

These are qualifications well calculated to make their possessor beloved, particularly when joined,

(323) S. Aug. de Serm. Dom. in Monte, lib. 1. cap. 6.
(324) Prov. xxix. 23, and xv. 33.

as in the case of St. Francis, with the purest morals, with the most ardent charity, the most profound humility, and a countenance which seemed angelical. After the portrait of his mind, we find in the same narrative the following description of his person :(325) "He was of middle size, neither short nor tall, but well-shaped. His face was oval, his forehead smooth, his eyes black and modest, his mouth pretty, his hair was of chestnut colour; his beard black, but scanty, his body very thin, his skin delicate, his speech pleasing and animated, his voice strong and piercing, but altogether mild and sonorous."

We must receive in their true sense what was understood in saying that "he was simple in his actions and words." The term simplicity has two significations in the French language. It is used to describe a person of little mind, narrow-minded, dull, not well informed, weak and credulous; it is also used to express candour, ingenuousness, and uprightness; to describe a person who is natural, without finesse, or artfulness. It is in this sense that it is said that the greatest geniuses are the most simple; enemies of sublety and trick, which are only appropriate to narrow minds. The simplicity of the just, in scriptural language, is true virtue, solid without drawback,

(325) We see from this description that the most talented painters have not given us a correct likeness of St. Francis. There is one in the convent of the Recollects, at Paris, which answers to the description which his companions have left us of him; but the engravers have refused to copy it, because it is not by one of the first masters. It would be desirable that some clever artist would work upon the sketch those who had seen the saint have left us of him, and upon what is correct in the bad painting.

purity of heart, uprightness of intention; in opposition to every sort of duplicity or disguise, everything that St. Paul calls "the prudence of the flesh; the wisdom of this world."(326) St. Gregory so explains it.(327) This does not exclude prudence, but only malice and double-dealing. Our Blessed Lord warns us "to be prudent as serpents and simple as doves.(328) St. Paul says: "I would have you to be wise in good, and simple in evil."(329) Every Christian must be simple in faith, submitting himself purely and simply to the decisions of the Church, without any endeavour to elude them, by crafty evasions, as some do in so scandalous a manner; simple in the intercourse of society, being frank and sincere, doing injury to no one; simple in devotion, going straight to God, following the way pointed out by the Gospel, not resembling those of whom the Wise man says: "they go two ways, and have two hearts,"(330) the one for God and the other for the world.

Such was the simplicity of St. Francis, or to speak plainer, he was simple because he had no other intention in his mind, no other movement in his heart, than to be conformed to Jesus Christ. In order to imitate His poverty, His humility, His sufferings, all His virtues, he did many things far above the ordinary rules of human wisdom;

(326) Rom. viii. 6. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

(327) S. Greg. in Job. lib. 1 cap. 1. et lib. 10. cap. 29. alias 16.

(328) Math. x. 16.

(329) Rom. xvi. 19.

(330) Eccli. ii. 14 and iii. 28.

and as to his language it was formed on that of the Gospel. For this reason some persons in the world looked upon him as a simple-minded man, who had more piety than strength of mind, more fervour than understanding.

But in the first place, they do not reflect that what appears little to the eyes of the flesh, is great in the eye of faith, by the excellence of the model, and by the magnanimity of the motive. Is it, then, a trifling thing to conform in all matters to Jesus Christ, in order to become agreeable to God? To embrace the folly of the cross, and to put in practice what is recommended by St. Paul: 'If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."(331)

In the second place, it is forgotten that St. Francis performed actions, of which, even the world if it judge correctly, must acknowledge the greatness. Renouncing all the things of this world with more reality and generosity than the most celebrated and vaunted philosophers. Poor, alone, without influence, without support, to have undertaken what would have made the richest hesitate, the repair of three churches, and to have succeeded in this undertaking. To have formed the plan of a society of men, destitute of all the goods of this world, who were to spread themselves over the whole earth, and have no other funds for their subsistence than the Providence of the Supreme Being. With an ordinary para-

(331) 1 Cor. iii. 18 et 19.

ble and without any intrigue to have caused this singular plan to be approved by Popes, by Cardinals, by the greatest and most learned men who were hostile to it, and to carry it into execution with a success which has been the admiration of the universe for the last six hundred years. To have induced worldlings to forsake riches, honours, and pleasures, to place themselves in the centre of poverty, humiliation, and penance. To make as much impression, by the eloquence of his preaching, upon the nobles as upon the people, upon the learned as upon the ignorant. To have had the courage to pass over seas, to go through hostile armies, to preach to a Mahometan Prince, the religion of Jesus Christ; to have convinced, to have moved, and to have compelled that prince to respect the holy truths of the Gospel. To have devoted himself to public utility, to have lived solely for the service of others, to have worked incessantly to reform the morals of the people, re-establish peace and concord, to render men reasonable and Christians: all this is what St. Francis did; and is not this something great? Can the world refuse to admit it to be so? To act thus is it not necessary to have talents, judgment, penetration, adroitness and strength of mind? It is true that the Spirit of God gave him supernatural lights and extraordinary strength; but these gifts do not prevent our admiring the qualifications which were in his nature. Let the character of his mind, his talents, and his natural dispositions, be carefully studied and no doubt will remain that he was destined for great things.

He may be compared to St. Anthony, the Patriarch of cenobitical life, and to St. Martin, the Bishop of Tours; for these three saints have some peculiar relations to each other, which will be very apparent on reading their lives. Although St. Anthony had not studied, and lived in great simplicity in the mountainous parts of the desert, he had, nevertheless, according to St. Athanasius,(332) penetrating and lively wit, rare prudence, wonderful facility in confounding, by solid arguments, both the pagan philosophers and the Arian heretics. His sanctity did not render him rude and boorish; he was well-bred and polite; his conversation was remarked to be what the expression of the Apostle describes, (333) graceful and seasoned with salt. No one can say that St. Martin was deficient in talents,—that illustrious Bishop, who was so greatly esteemed by St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Paulinus, and other great personages of his age, who governed his diocese with so much prudence, who spoke to princes with so much firmness, and was so honoured by them (334), whose discourses were so convincing, whose conversation was no less remarkable for its vivacity and agreeableness, than for its gravity and dignity; who was wholly master of the Scriptures, explained and developed the most hidden mysteries in such choice, appropriate, and energetic terms, that Sulpicius Severus, who was a very learned man, assures us that

(332) Vit. S. Anton. n. 72 et seq.
(333) Coloss. iv. 6.
(334) Sulp. Sev. vit. S. M. n. 26. Id. Dial. 2. n. 10.

he never heard anything to equal it from any other person whatsoever. Nevertheless, St. Martin had not studied (335), he was a man of great simplicity, very poor, and so negligent of his exterior appearance, that it often drew upon him contempt. He was looked upon as weak in mind and foolish (336). When it was proposed to make him Bishop of Tours, there were some bishops who rejected him as a contemptible person, unworthy of the episcopate; and after his election (337) he continued to wear the same livery of penance and humility, and was desirous of appearing equally vile in the eyes of men.

St. Francis was similarly simple, but he had great qualities of mind and heart, and his simplicity was a perfection in him, not a defect. If it induced him to do things of which human prudence disapproves, it was because he was guided by divine light; it was because he sought to be despised by the world, to render himself more conformable to Jesus Christ. Men of his age were not deceived by it; they discovered the principle which made him act and speak with such simplicity. His constant endeavour to humble himself, and draw on himself contempt, only gave them a greater esteem for his person, and they loaded him with honours. If our age deems itself wiser, what reason has it for not doing similar justice?

(335) Paulin. Petroc. vit. S. Mart. lib. 4.

(336) Sulp. Sev. vit. S. Mart. n. 7.

(337) S. Greg. Turon. Hist. Franc. lib. 2. cap. 1.

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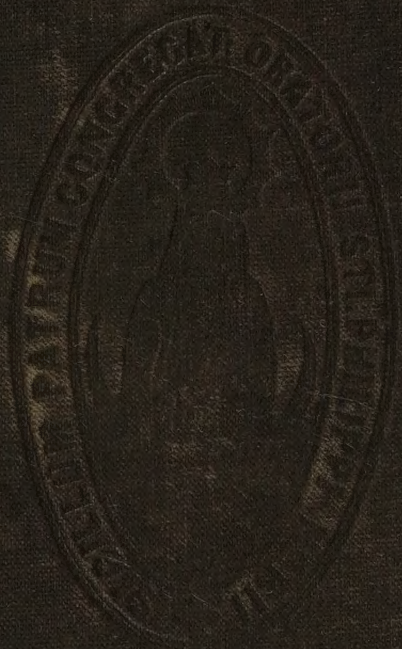
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